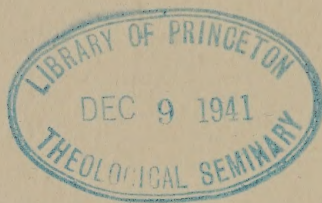


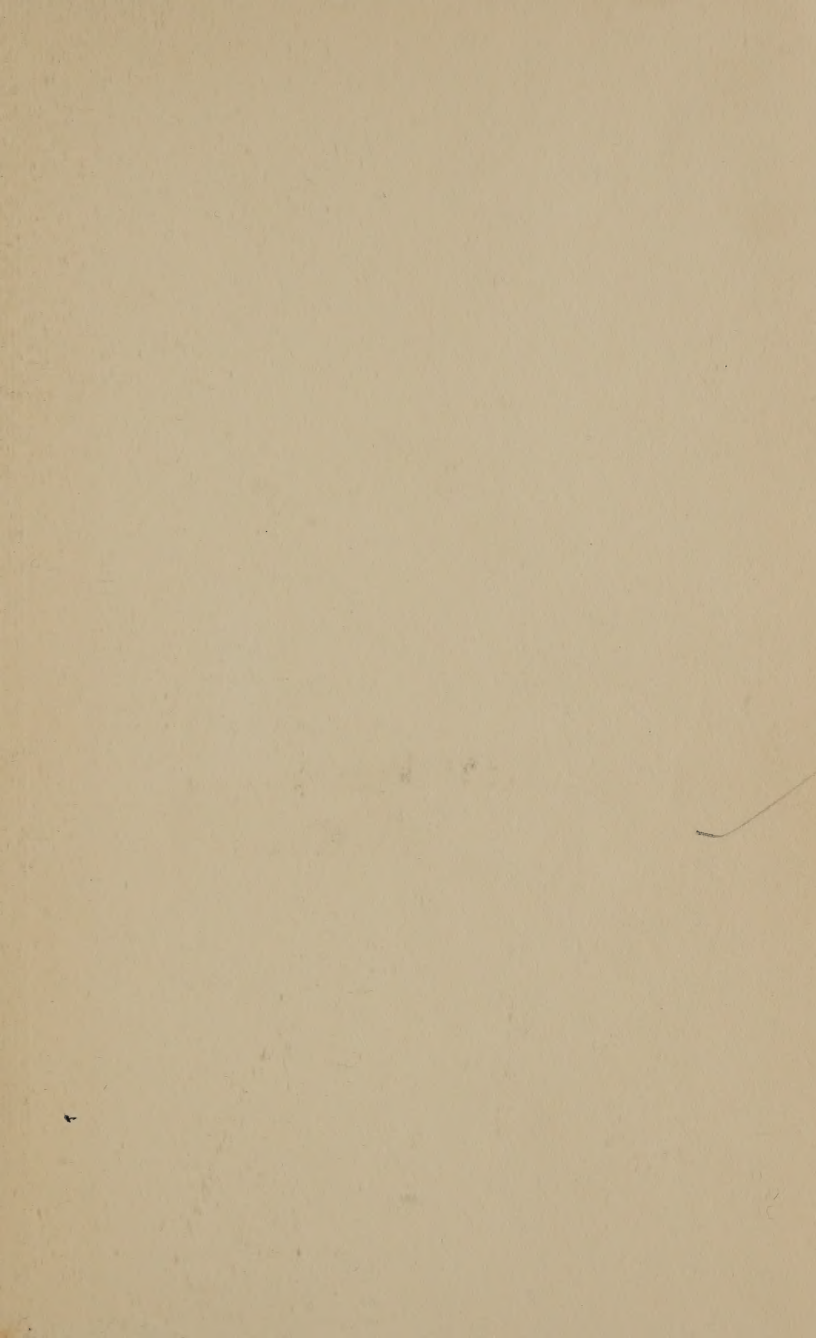


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IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

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GOOD NEWS FOR BAD TIMES

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

By

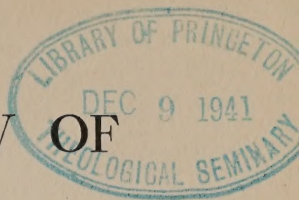
FREDERICK K. STAMM

MINISTER OF THE CLINTON AVENUE CHURCH,
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

1941

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

NEW YORK



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First Printing.

To
ELIZABETH, JANET, MARGARET,
CHARLES, THOMAS
AND
FREDERICK

FOREWORD

In divinity and love

What's best worth saying can't be said,

says Coventry Patmore in one of his poems; and this is true when one comes to preach about Jesus and his Cross.

All I can hope for as I send out these topics which were used from the pulpit of the Clinton Avenue Church, Brooklyn, to a public which has heretofore so kindly received my writings is, that

... whoso takes his cross and follows Christ

Will pardon me for what I leave untold

When in the fleckered dawning he shall spy

The glitterance of Christ.

Jesus had little chance in the bloody day in which he lived. One wonders what chance he has today! At all events we are living in a period comparable to the time which saw Jesus plotted against, condemned, crucified. Thus the Cross is not an isolated event. It is still set up.

Preachers must not look for applause in our time. Let them be glad, if, at the close of a year's preaching, here and there one can be found in the pew who will say with Browning:

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,

Or decomposes, but to recompose,

Become my universe that feels and knows.

The fear that haunts me in giving this book to the public is that it is all too simple and obvious. It lacks erudition. It is not theological, but before you criticise it on that score, remember that the Christianity for which I have contended is denied by the direction in which the world is moving as well as by the loud proclamation of contrary ideas. I can keep my faith in Christianity only by fighting for what I conceive it to be.

So, my dear reader, if to you, in these pages, Jesus is seen to be the crown and destiny of all things in the universe and out of it, the book will have served its purpose.

F. K. S.

The Clinton Avenue Church,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

I

THEY CRUCIFIED THE PIONEER

It is a typical failing of society to put a rather contemptuous, pitying estimate upon the pioneer, the breaker of new paths, the man who stands in his loneliness head and shoulders above his contemporaries. Especially is this kind of estimate put upon the enthusiast for high ideals in religion; upon the man who deviates from the beaten track of faith and upon the man who sets himself against prevailing opinions.

This is what happened to that adventurous Spirit that grew up in the back streets of the little Oriental village of Nazareth. There had been great excitement in Capernaum over a certain young man by the name of Jesus. And for two reasons. He was breaking the Jewish Sabbatical Law. Horrors! He was healing a man on the Sabbath! Had he been pulling a sheep out of a pit, it would have caused no stir. But a man! He was also choosing certain companions whom he was training to go from place to place to proclaim his principles. It is natural to suppose that this would cause some excitement and alarm. Here was a young upstart

who would not conform. The priestly party in Capernaum got into communication with the authorities at Jerusalem, and a deputation was sent from the officials to inquire into the strange reports and to see just what this young fellow was trying to do. And when they found that he was likely to turn out to be a dangerous individual they hit upon a plot to assassinate him.

The world of today has several ways of disposing of a man of that character. First of all, by attaching a label to him. We do not crucify men of that sort on wooden crosses, but we hold them up to the scorn and ridicule of public opinion. We do not burn them, we brand them. We call them radical and dangerous to the best interests of society. We do with them exactly what the Quaker did with the little dog that barked and snapped at his heels as he walked down the street. He turned around and addressed the dog thus: "I will not kill thee, nor will I strike thee. But I will call thee a bad name—'Mad Dog.'" Immediately the spectators rushed to his assistance and killed the "Mad Dog." No, we will not kill the man who protests, but we will label him and let public opinion do the rest.

Society deals with the Promethean man in a severe manner. We find it simple to dispose of him by saying he is an enemy to society. That is, he is not an enemy to society in the large, but to a certain class. In politics he is an enemy of the man who holds his position through favor. In business he is the enemy of the man who profits at the expense of his fellow man. In in-

dustry he is the enemy of selfish interests. In religion he is the enemy of the exponents of ancient creedal statements. To all of these he is the friend, would they but know it. Elijah was Ahab's friend, but when Ahab met him in Naboth's vineyard, Ahab said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "I have found thee because thou hast sold thyself to that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah."

The proof of a man's madness, according to the world, lies in this: that he does not act in the same fashion as those incomparably wise people who make up the majority in every age.

Or if we do not attach a label to him, we laugh at him. If he is saying something to which we do not want to listen, we say, "Well, he is a good man, but terribly misguided. It is well for him to get those things out of his system, but something has taken hold of him which makes him ridiculous." Paul can bring home some lessons which Festus might well learn, but Festus laughs and says, "Paul, much learning has made you mad."

The second point to be noticed is that the madness with which Jesus was accused was produced by the loftiness of his spirit. It broadened his horizon and made him look far above his contemporaries.

Standing off from Jesus two thousand years and judging his career thoughtfully, it may not be difficult for us to understand why there was so much opposition to him. Yet reading the New Testament in a purely casual manner may make us wonder just why he was

hated and feared. I remember, as a boy, reading the story of the trial of Jesus before Pilate, and I remember remarking, that, after all, Pilate was not such a bad man. I did not penetrate deeply into the situation, nor see the forces that were clashing in that trial. I saw only a ruler who was possessed with something of the milk of human kindness, and I saw Jesus then only as a man of kind heart and lovely disposition. I did not see the ideals for which he was striving. I did not see the thing that drove him to attack the heart of the enemy stronghold. Indeed, many now call him a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. It is an illuminating designation, but the phrase may slip very lightly from our lips. He was all that, but he was a Man of Sorrows because of his loneliness, and his loneliness was induced by his knowledge that the great mass of people to whom he was preaching did not see what he saw.

The world advances and men are lifted to a higher knowledge by the insanity of a few souls, by the intellectual and moral geniuses who are decades and centuries ahead of their time. And the penalty that such men pay is the penalty of loneliness.

We sometimes hear it said, "The world does not care for me. I am being persecuted." Well, if you are cold and selfish and disobliging and indifferent about the welfare of others, then you may expect people to pass you by, but do not confuse this with the kind of loneliness that is felt by great hearts. The great heart stands above the sordidness of the crowd and is seeking to

execute plans which the world does not appreciate. And the adverse judgment that is passed upon that kind, does not so much reflect upon the one that is judged as upon those who pass the judgment. To stand before a great painting and feel no thrill, is not the fault of the painting nor the artist, but the total stupidity of the spectator. What the world needs to learn is that it is high time to estimate people, not upon the basis of political, racial, social or religious prejudices, but by their insight into men's aims, needs, and ambitions.

The world today needs the insanity of Jesus. We have become mere imitators. We stroll along in the wake of those who have gone before. It is always refreshing to see a display of individuality. That is why we hail with delight the coming of a prophet with a new voice. That is why we listen with rapt attention to the man who has courage to denounce the old and set up the new. Not merely because it is new, but because it represents and adequately expresses our own trembling convictions. When any man's religion is characterized as reasonable and moderate, and kept in its place, and not allowed to interfere with social enjoyments, and political and municipal corruptions, we have a right to question that man's religion. We have a right to wonder whether his religion has anything in it of the stuff which Jesus expected when he said, "The Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," or whether his religion is not mere sentimental softness. Jesus approved of the type of

John the Baptist, a man of stern and masculine qualities. And he himself was more than a "pale Galilean." He was a mixture of fine tenderness, loving care for the despised of earth, fearless words, fierce denunciation and courageous deeds, all of which were used, not to please men but to serve them. It is difficult to conceive of anyone being a worthy disciple of Jesus who is not willing to harness his combative faculties to the service of mankind. "Of all misadventures," says Dr. Fosdick, "in the imitation of Jesus, none can be farther from the mark than a pallid, pulseless, sentimental man."

It is like a tonic to see the person who has earnestness enough, and individuality enough to step out from the company of others who do things because it is what all the others do, and be himself. "Every soul," says Maeterlinck, "in its sphere has charge of a lighthouse." Let him see that the light is burning. Every person, however lowly his station, has his influence. You can help men see God—not a God who is interested only in controlling the stars in their courses, but who is interested in the destiny of a world of men. Youth does not have the experience of age, nor must youth wear the sword and buckler of his elders. The armor of another may be worthless to him. Every age must find its way to God by its own path. But no youth should be afraid of the heights, nor fearful of being queer or fanatical. Stand out yonder some night under the stars of heaven. Feel the strangeness of life! If you want to know this Jesus about whom we speak, then

do not hesitate to stand alone with him for a little while. Find out why you are here. Not to be a mere automaton, doing what others do, but matching your strength against the evils of the world.

Christ with his lamp of truth,
Sitteth upon the hill
Of everlasting youth
And calls.

II

WHAT MAKES JESUS MASTER?

WE ARE setting out to answer a question which was asked of Jesus when he was going about as an itinerant preacher and teacher, and which the world has never ceased asking: "What is there in Jesus which sets him above every other man, and which demands that the world look upon him as Master and Lord?" There are some questions which demand a lot of serious and clear thinking, and this is one of them.

If one could line up tens of thousands of church people, and have other tens of thousands of people ask this question, "Why do you believe in Jesus Christ and accept him as the Guide of life?" what would they answer? How would you answer? Suppose ten sceptics should ask that question of ten men who have been going to church for the past twenty or thirty years, what would they answer?

It is quite possible that many people have not thought seriously about it, and consequently could not give a satisfactory answer. They would take refuge in some such reply as this: "Because the Bible says that

Jesus is the Son of God." Or, they might answer, "It is the teaching of the Church." All of which is true. But all such answers are incomplete. In fact many a man would turn wearily away and either go seeking an answer elsewhere, or be more confirmed in his scepticism. Quoting Bible texts to someone who knows little about the Bible, or quoting an article from a creed to a man who cares nothing about creeds, leaves the man more confused than ever. If men are seeking the truth and the way of life and make their way toward Jesus in the hope of finding them, they must find Jesus to be something more than what is said about him in the Bible, in the creeds, in the church.

There are always two tests of authority. First of all: Is what the man says true? Jesus did not go about saying, "Now I'm speaking, and you've got to believe what I say." No, he went about searching out this truth and that, and then humbly submitting it to those who were listening. He spoke out of his own experience, measured what he had to say alongside of the great laws of the universe, and spoke to the deepest needs of the human heart. Then he said to them, "If you want to know whether what I speak is true or not, try it out and you shall know whether these are just my opinions, or whether they come from the heart of God." There were many people who made light of his teachings and there were few who were responsive to them.

The second test of authority is: Does what the man says represent some supreme spiritual value? Does it

represent the meaning of life? It is possible that on a number of occasions when I am preaching to my congregation, they could say to me, "Mr. Preacher, you've missed the mark. What you are saying isn't true. You may be earnest and sincere, but it just doesn't harmonize with the needs of the human soul." I wonder how many times that can be said of us who are preachers. We miss the mark, and that accounts for a lot of ineffective preaching. There is nothing a Christian minister should more deeply desire than to be able to say true things and say them with authority. One thing is sure, no preacher will ever be able to speak with authority merely because he has a bit of learning. Speaking truth depends on spiritual gifts and graces and on a right approach to truth. Thus we who set out to preach can be fallible, and we can say things which have no spiritual value. But you can hardly say that about the preaching and teaching of Jesus. When you read what he says you begin to assert: "Yes, that strikes home." You may not be willing to put it into practice, but you know it has spiritual value.

Thus after nineteen hundred years, and now in the midst of a world that to a large extent has ignored the mastership of Jesus, we still hold him up as the one who speaks with authority and not as the scribes and the Pharisees. And when you come asking, "By what authority?" we can think of at least four reasons.

In the first place, there have always been people who have wanted an ideal pattern for life and have found it in Jesus. When he was about to go to the cross he said,

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Today as you walk about the earth you can find people of every nation, every race, every language who have been drawn to him in childlike devotion.

Why is this true? If I should ask you, "What is the reason for your allegiance?" it would be discovered that there is a divine yearning in you. Most of us have some deep-down desire for goodness. We like to reach out a little farther. We come across someone whom we feel embodies in himself great virtues and whose personality attracts us. But still we are unsatisfied. After a while we begin to discover flaws and imperfections even in the best of men.

There is one life, however, which has never been surpassed or given us cause for disappointment. Not because Jesus is so much wiser than we, but because there is in him an absolute truth and beauty and goodness. When you have come upon him, something within says: "I've found the answer to my ideal."

I remember three books which found their place in my library as a young man and which have been there ever since. I have always been glad that they were written when I was quite young. One was by Herbert Willetts, entitled "The Call of The Christ." The second was "The Character of Jesus," by Charles E. Jefferson, and the third was "The Manhood of the Master," by Harry Emerson Fosdick. I remember, without looking at these books, how certain characteristics of Jesus were set down and expounded—characteristics which are not unique in Jesus, but

which find their fullest expression in him. They told about his courage, his magnanimity, his indignation, his affection, his joy, his power of endurance, and his sincerity. These are qualities which every person can develop and which are necessary to a full and blessed life. I needed to know about them, and you need to know, and nowhere are they so completely embodied as in the one great personality—Jesus.

Then, too, one day I learned of the splendid poise of Jesus. He was never embarrassed or caught off his guard. He knew how to read human nature. His insight into events and the meaning of them was clear. His life was the perfect embodiment of love crowned by the highest possible expression of sacrificial devotion. Thus when we want to go back to the source of the stream of Christian influence, we need not look at a formulated creed, nor at the ecclesiastical organization with all its imperfections, nor at a code of laws; but at this illuminating personality who binds men to himself with cords of personal devotion and exercises an authority born of his own divine expression of truth, and beauty, and goodness. Sidney Lanier has put our feeling about Jesus into poetic language which will last a long, long time:

But thee, but thee, O Sovereign seer of time;
But thee, poet's poet, wisdom's tongue;
But thee, O man's best man, O love's best love,
A perfect life in perfect labor writ,
O all men's comrade, servant, king, or priest——
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,

What least defect or shadow of defect,
What rumor, tattled by an enemy,
Of inference loose, what lack of grace
Even in torture's grasp or sleep's or death's——
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in thee,
Jesus, good Paragon, thou Crystal Christ.¹

Then again, men have made response to the message of Jesus. He never tried, as we do sometimes, to prove the existence of God. We look in vain in the Gospels for reasons for believing in the existence of God. Jesus just assumed the existence of God and called God "Father." He told people what God was like. And when they heard it they felt that it filled their need and answered their deepest longings. They said, "We never saw the like of it." And when Jesus speaks of God he meets our human need at several points. He meets us in that dim borderland between what we grasp and what we reach after. After all, our thinking is done only in fragments, and our deeds are fragmentary. Put our thinking and our deeds alongside of his thinking and deeds, and we will at once discover our incompleteness. We will long for a complete revelation of God such as he had. He meets us also at the place where we are dissatisfied with ourselves. We know we miss the mark, and we feel the possibility of forgiveness and a life made over. He meets us, too, at the place where we know the inadequacy of a selfish life and the joy of a life of service. Yes, men have made response to

¹ From poem by Sidney Lanier, "The Crystal." Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

the appeals of Jesus, and when they have done so they have found completeness.

Then again, Jesus has a right to be called Master because the life of Jesus works. That does not mean that it brings success in a financial or social sense. Indeed, a man is liable to be less financially secure if he follows Jesus, and most certainly he will be less concerned with his place as a social highbrow. And to say that the life of Jesus works does not mean it enables one to avoid trouble. Some of the world's greatest saints have been the greatest sufferers. If you will read the record of the saints of all ages you will discover that three things characterized them: they were cheerful, they were courageous, and they were always getting into trouble. For some reason or other when a saint gets into trouble today we are liable to say, "What a fool he is," or "He doesn't know any better and will come to his senses by and by." But contrary to our little opinions, when one accepts the mastership of Jesus, instead of helping one to avoid trouble, it is liable to get one into trouble. That is not a very bright prospect, is it? And that may account for our compromises and our subterfuges. The men who believed in the authority of Jesus put all that on the account sheet. But the life of Jesus works in that it puts a purpose and aim into life, and makes one know that one is in line with that one increasing purpose toward which the whole creation moves.

Archibald Rutledge once watched one of his negro workmen making a thing of clean shining beauty out of a rusty, filthy old tugboat engine, and asked him

how he succeeded in doing it. The negro replied, "Well, it's this way—I got a glory." And upon that brief conversation Berton Braley wrote a poem, entitled "The Glory Within":

Oh, you gotta get a glory
In the work you do;
A hallelujah chorus
In the heart of you.

Paint, or tell a story,
Sing, or shovel coal,
But you gotta get a glory,
Or the job lacks soul.

Oh, Lord, give me a glory.
Is it much to give?
For you gotta get a glory
Or you just don't live!

The Great, whose shining labors
Make our pulses throb,
Were men who got a glory
In their daily job.

The battle might be gory
And the odds unfair,
But the men who got a glory
Never knew despair.

Oh, Lord, give me a glory.
When all else is gone,
If you've only got a glory
You can still go on!

To those who get a glory
It is like the sun,
And you can see it glowing
Through the work they've done.

Oh, fame is transitory,
Riches fade away,
But when you get a glory
It is there to stay.

Oh, Lord, give me a glory
And a workman's pride,
For you gotta get a glory
Or you're dead inside! ²

Then, once more, Jesus is made Master because he gives us a satisfactory interpretation of the confused and tangled processes of life. John Burroughs wrote a letter near the end of his life in which he said, "I wish someone would light up the way for me." Doubtless that is the cry of every one of us—"Light up the way." We are living in a dark day and none of us can see the way clearly. It is a confused day. We are cursed by greed, suffering, failure, and war. We are nervous, gloomy, apathetic. We hoped for peace, but all we can see ahead is conflict, disruption, and war. There is moral and intellectual confusion. We need a light. "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And the reason Jesus said that about himself was be-

² From *The Saturday Evening Post*, January 4, 1941. Reprinted by permission of Mr. Braley.

cause he thought differently from the world. If you want to see things differently you have got to be a different kind of person. A man is what he loves and lives for. And Jesus loved men and loved God and he lived for men and God. It is not strange that when men looked on him they beheld his glory, glory as the only Son of the Father full of grace and truth. So if I want to find a satisfactory interpretation of life, I must look, not at the men who think carnally, but at the Man who thinks spiritually. And that spirituality is manifested, not in killing men and blotting out the face of God from the world, but in preserving men, and revealing God as the Saviour of the world.

Yes, Jesus has the right to be called Master because men have found in him their ideal, because men have found life when they made response to Jesus, because the life of Jesus works, and because he gives a satisfactory interpretation to the confused and tangled processes of life.

III

A PAGE FROM THE TABLE-TALK OF JESUS

IN CONTRAST to the manner in which we are accustomed to listen to instruction—in the class-room, the pulpit, the forum, and over the radio—Jesus did his teaching, and set forth some of his profoundest thoughts in little groups, and not so much after the manner of studied discourses but more as spontaneous utterances as the occasion supplied the inspiration.

Thus the subject we are thinking about here comes out of the table-talk of Jesus. One of the leading Pharisees of the metropolis had invited him to dinner. Just why he was invited we do not know. Possibly it was thought that people might have a better opportunity to talk to him around the table than in some public place. Possibly he was a casual guest. At all events, if the invited guests thought they were going to have a good time debating with him, they were disappointed. Jesus was not a debater. He never had much time to engage in sophistries. The meal had not proceeded very far before they found themselves in the presence of a Man who went straight to the mark.

The first thing that happened at that Sabbath day's meal was the healing of a man. The man was there with dropsy. Any man in distress was the object of Jesus' care. "Is it allowable to cure people on the Sabbath?" he asked as he looked around the table. And before they had time to answer, he cured the man and sent him away. One can see the smile that played around the mouth of Jesus as he said, "If your child or ox fall into a well on the Sabbath day, you will immediately pull him out." Everybody looked at everybody else, but no one said a word.

Then as he watched the invited guests pushing for the best places at the table—they had no place cards in that day—another thought struck him. He said, "When any one invites you to a wedding banquet, do not take the best place, lest perhaps some more honored guest than you may have been asked, and the man who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Make room for him.' You'll be a bit shame-faced. People who exalt themselves will be humbled, and people who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then he turned to his host and said, "You would do better to invite people who can't return the favor. Why do you always invite people who have more than enough to eat? Why don't you invite the poor who have less?"

By this time things were becoming a bit embarrassing, and the situation strained. People at that table were not accustomed to such plain talk. Then one of those smiling individuals who always carry a good supply of

small change and pious platitude came to the relief of his host. He filled up the awkward gap in the conversation by saying, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God."

No exception could be taken to this statement as a general proposition. Jesus was always talking of his Father's Kingdom and of the necessity of getting into it. But he was too honest of soul, and the enterprise upon which he had embarked was too important, to allow him to do business in the shallow waters of platitude. He at once launched out into the deep and let down his net for a draught of something vital. He told them a most unlikely story of a rich man who made a great supper and invited many guests. The invitations were apparently accepted but when the time came the guests began to beg off with the most absurd excuses. It is an unlikely story because that is not the way of the world. It is not the way people ordinarily treat invitations to great suppers or great occasions given by prominent persons. If it should be announced that the President of the United States would hold a reception and we got an invitation, we would be there. And the reason Jesus told this unlikely story was because he knew how common it is for men, when they have the privilege of becoming the chosen guests of God, to refuse the call.

An invitation is an act of grace. Any invitation is. The person who invites you to dinner does not need to do it. If he is honest, he does not do it because he expects anything in return or because he wants to do

business with you. If you should offer to pay him you would insult him. His invitation springs from an unselfish interest in your comfort and pleasure. "Come for all things are now ready." All you have to do is to enter into the full enjoyment of what is prepared for you.

The first things one may well consider are the excuses which were offered. One man said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and must go and see it." The second said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen and I must go and prove them." They were both polite and courteous. The third curtly said, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." He made no apologies. Two of them refused the invitation on the ground of looking after their personal interests, the third on the ground of his affection for his wife.

One can note in these excuses a sort of epidemic of insanity that sits upon the world. That insanity is shown in two ways. First, we allow a thing which is good in itself to stand in the way of our supreme loyalty. It is highly desirable that a man should be an owner whether of farms, or oxen, or factories, and that he should be married. Jesus was not listing a series of crimes which these men had committed. He was calling attention to their preoccupation with interests entirely legitimate which crowded out the thing that was of supreme importance. It seems as though the more valuable a thing is, the less we care for it. Insanity does not consist merely in a state of mind which sets out to do some other person great harm. We are insane

when we do ourselves harm by refusing to accept gifts for our use.

For see what gifts religion seeks to bestow on us—gifts which are highly desirable and which enhance the power of personality and character. There is the gift called help for our weakness, guidance in the right direction, freedom from anxiety, victory over self, control of passions, supremacy over circumstances, a tranquil spirit, and when death comes the ability to face it courageously. Many people wander about through life wishing for such blessings, and they are here to be had. The gifts are going begging, lying at our doors, offered to every one of us, pressed upon us day by day, all on the simple condition that we appropriate them. But we allow the farm, the business, the oxen, our affections, to masquerade under the garb of imperative duties, and say, "We are so pressed by necessary obligations and engagements that we really do not have time to attend to these higher questions of life." We talk about colossal evils in the world today and the many pressure groups which would destroy religion. But the greatest danger we face today is not the evil forces from without, but the indulging of legitimate business and lawful and pure affections up to the point where they leave the soul bankrupt. It is the excessive and abusive possession of gifts and absorption in our duties that turns them into impediments and blocks the way to God.

Our insanity is shown also by the fact that we can well belong to that society of religious humbugs who say, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom

of God." It is quite easy to divorce our religion from our ethics. There are no more difficult people to get at than those who bow in assent to religion, but who allow its implications to whistle harmlessly over their heads. I can imagine Jesus saying to this man, "Well said, but how much does the truth of religion affect your conduct? Are you taking your religion seriously? Is it more to you than a form of words on your lips or a set of graceful observances to which you turn aside? Are you willing to make sacrifices in the matter of land and property interests or in the enjoyments of your home comforts in order to serve God? Unless you are ready to put first things first and subordinate the lesser interests to the demands of character, you are a humbug."

Again, we ought to think just what we are invited to. There are still a lot of people who have never gotten beyond the idea that the call to religion is a call to hard and rigid duty. One is inclined here to deal at length with the matter of duty. We have forgotten that there is such a thing as duty, and that there are those who go through life "fudging and evading and side-stepping, till their first contact with elemental realities is the cold sweat of their deathbed." Halford Luccock, in a little book written long ago, speaks of the people who go through life stealing a ride, or on half fare, with no sense of debt. They have never learned the meaning of what St. Paul said, "I am debtor," and they think they can cancel their obligation by a few patronizing words.

But by and large people do their duty. I have seen people engage in the most exacting duty, carrying heavy burdens without much complaint. They would like to get out from under their duties if they could—and rightly so. And because they are already burdened they look upon religion as just one more duty.

But the religion to which we are invited is not merely a duty. It is a privilege, a gift, a feast of life, and until we catch that meaning we will continue to seek our enjoyment in the tangible things of life and turn away from the intangible.

Again, we are invited to make our homes centers where God's spirit rules, where the things Jesus counted most important are actually regarded as most important. It is so easy to get our sense of importance confused. The church would not have so much difficulty in getting youth to accept Christian ideals if the children in the home were started off with ideas that are really important. It is desirable that children should be kept physically clean, and most mothers see to it that when their children go to school, or step out into the social world, they look well. But that is not nearly so important as what has been put into their minds. It is quite possible for a mother to be very careful about dirt on the faces of her children, but not very careful about the dirt of race prejudice in their minds. Jesus said that we are quite concerned about the outside of the platter, but careless about what goes on inside the mind. We may be very much concerned and shocked at the woman who eats peas with her knife, but not too

greatly agitated over the woman who sticks a knife into somebody's reputation. Yes, I am quite sure that Jesus invites people to make their homes places where ideals flourish, where the outlook upon life is not narrow and mean, but where the characters of boys and girls, men and women, take on the spirit of generosity and love.

Then, too, we are invited to a great fellowship in service. That, too, is a gift and a feast. It is joining in service that lifts life out of selfish routines and lets it overflow into other lives. What does being a Christian mean in our kind of a world? We are in a rather difficult world today. Demands of various kinds are made upon us. A thousand needs pass before our eyes. Situations are present which call for Christian attitudes. Not everyone thinks alike on the problems of economics, capital and labor, and war. But how do we get along with those who differ from us? How do we approach the tensions? A recent novelist describes a young woman as "calling herself a Socialist out of pure high spirits and never having time to inquire what it means." It is not possible to call oneself a Christian out of "pure high spirits" without facing the problem of what being a Christian means, in attitude and actions, in a world, that in so many of its ruling ideas, denies what Jesus taught. We are invited to share Jesus' concern for all defrauded and despoiled people, people who have fewer opportunities than we have, and who are victimized by circumstances beyond their control. We are invited to take part in extending Jesus' teaching of

brotherhood to all races. To do this in a world where hatreds are violent is not easy, but we are asked to have the mind of Jesus on this matter. We are invited to become part of a movement which tries to make the world a place of peace instead of a battlefield. But we are inclined to say, "I pray thee have me excused. Peace isn't so popular with everyone. So don't count on me to be a witness to the gospel of love."

There is still another lesson which comes out of this table-talk of Jesus. When the invitation was refused, the opportunity passed. The master of the home said, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and bring in the poor, the lame, and the blind." These people would not be so occupied with their land, their oxen, and their home comforts that they would be unwilling to come. "Let my home be filled with guests but none of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper." Opportunity beckons, but the door to it does not remain forever open.

Master of human destinies am I,
Both fame and fortune on my footsteps wait,
I knock unbidden once at each man's gate
If sleeping wake, if feasting rise
Before I turn away.
It is the hour of fate.¹

Scientific men tell us that in the developing of every unborn babe there comes a time for the marshalling of

¹ From the poem, "Opportunity," by John J. Ingalls in *Silver Treasury* edited by Jane Manner. New York: Samuel French.

cells for the building of tissues and the forming of certain organs. If that period passes without the proper development of these organs the life is born imperfect or deformed. Operations may be performed to correct what is wrong, but the organism will never be what it was first intended to be.

The law of the developing spirit is just as inexorable. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. Omitted, all the voyage of life is bound in shallows and in miseries." That is true spiritually as well as physically. There is a time for the formation of Christian habits of thought, Christian modes of feeling, Christian lives of action. These splendid talents with which people are equipped ought to be put to use for the Kingdom of God. God is patient, but he cannot wait until we have a more convenient season. His work goes on with quiet persistence. People who are too busy with other things, pass out of the picture. They will go on living and being respectable, but they will never live a full life because they refuse the divine invitation to become partners in the eternal purpose.

IV

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

FOR three years Isaiah had walked about barefooted. He told the people that just as his feet were bare so the nation would eventually be stripped of its possessions. But no one believed him. People have a habit of not believing their prophets. They think they are visionary, not practical, and a bit off in the head. They would rather listen to some spell-binder who plays upon the prejudices and opinions of the crowd. But the depression came just as Isaiah feared it would. And as it has happened in every similar case since the world began, when Judah felt the hand of the oppressor, so likewise did her neighbors. Here were Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Arabia—all feeling the force of what Judah was feeling. And now Isaiah was speaking of Edom, Israel's oldest foe.

Isaiah was a poet, an imaginative genius. In his vision he saw a man standing on Mount Seir between Judah and Edom, in the dead of night. There was night to the right of him, night to the left of him; night on the

dwellings of Judah and night on the dwellings of Edom. Suddenly a cry pierced the darkness. It was the voice of this lonely figure there on the border between these two countries, "Watchman, what of the night?" How far has the night gone? Do you see any streaks of dawn on the horizon? How long till the dreary hours of the night are past? You've uttered that cry, haven't you? Hasn't there been some time when you felt as desolate as did that man there in his lonely vigil?

The watchman answered just as a watchman might have been expected to answer—"Morning cometh, also the night; if you will inquire, inquire ye; turn ye, come." It was as if he had said, "I do not know much; but I do know that the morning will come, and so will the night. If you would know more, come back again."

I imagine that Isaiah in his dream saw a lonely inhabitant of Edom who was caught in the desolation. He perhaps had little to do with the situation that enveloped these nations. He had not brought it about. He was but one of a multitude of citizens who were victims of wrong and cruel thinking on the part of those who held the destiny of the nation in their hands. And what a destiny! He uttered his cry out of the shadows of an enigmatic and mysterious life. Is not that what life seems to be—an enigma, a mystery? Is not this the cry of multitudes?——

So runs my dream: but what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

Algernon Charles Swinburne reached back to this poet-prophet and put the words into the never-to-be-forgotten lines:

Watchman! What of the night?

No light we see;

Our souls are bruised and sickened with the sight
Of this foul crime against humanity.

The Ways are dark——

"I see the morning light!"

.

Beyond the war-clouds and the reddened ways,

I see the promise of the Coming Days!

I see His sun arise, new charged with grace,

Earth's tears to dry and all her woes efface!

Christ lives! Christ loves! Christ rules!

No more shall Might,

Though leagued with all the forces of the Night,

Ride over Right. No more shall Wrong

The world's gross agonies prolong.

Who waits His time shall surely see

The triumph of His Constancy;

When, without let, or bar, or stay,

The coming of His Perfect Day

Shall sweep the Powers of Night away;

And Faith replumed for nobler flight,

And Hope aglow with radiance bright,

And Love in loveliness bedight

*Shall greet the morning light.*¹

7

¹ *What of the Night?* by Algernon Charles Swinburne. From *Collected Poems*, Harper and Brothers.

And now that our hopes have been drenched in blood and tears of another war I am thinking of the cries that still go up from the world, and of the answer that can and must be given by the church and by those who minister at her altar.

There is first of all, the cry of the *indolent*. Somewhere back in your childhood you were taught that religion has its value. You have a vague idea that there is a God, that there was a man called Jesus who died on a cross for some unaccountable reason, that there is a church where prayers are offered and hymns are sung and sermons are preached. But you hardly know what it is all about. You sometimes haunt the church, hardly knowing why you are there, but certain that down in the depths of your soul there is grief and anguish and despair. I have wished, on more than one occasion, that something might arouse men to bring out their possibilities and bring to them the joy and gladness of a life that is lived in God.

Sometimes, too, it is the cry of the *curious*. These folk were about in the days of Jesus. They wanted to know if there was marriage in heaven; if he could show them signs; if he could tell them by what power he did marvelous deeds; who would receive the greatest rewards for righteousness. They were always questioning him about something and wanting him to give them an answer to the uncertainties to which they were exposed.

We might be surprised today if we knew the number of people who are going from place to place and

from person to person, seeking something which can make them certain. How many have gone off to some psychic, or clairvoyant, or fortune teller, to give them some assurance of what the future holds! How many, beset by fears on every hand, have sought some pathway of escape instead of the one sure way of facing up to the difficulty with a willingness to take standing up whatever of ill may befall them! How many in desperation have lifted a cry for help to the heavens in the vain hope that, in some magical fashion, God would reach down his hand and pluck them from the burning! How many have gone about asking the question "Why?" and when no unequivocal answer was forthcoming have gone away in despair, wondering if there was any God at all who cares? Yes, curious about many things and greatly agitated were they, because curious questions could not be answered.

Sometimes the cry is *ironical*. One can hardly criticize this spirit of irony on the part of many people when one beholds the strange spectacle of the church and religion making bed-fellows with the unholy practices of business and politics and war. The cry goes up, "What is the church doing? It has a gospel of life to preach but it deals with questions which are inadequate for the times. It proposes methods which are fit only for a four-ringed circus. It fails to meet the intellectual issues of modern times and to rise to a convincing spiritual interpretation of the world which laboratory science has been discovering. Its pronouncements are hopeless and futile. It spends time on issues and prob-

lems that are remote from the ones that are central in the minds of men today." In the light of all this, it is no wonder that the cry of irony is heard every time we turn around.

Sometimes the question is one of *earnestness*. Men are perplexed. They wonder why they are here. They wonder about the future of religion. They have tried their best to find a God who is adequate to the deepest needs of their souls. They want to pray, but they do not know what kind of God to pray to. They want to be honest but the low idealism of the day is a warning to them that if they would live they must get their daily bread by hook or crook. They sometimes go to church and look up like hungry sheep for food and go away as hungry as ever. They want the church to exercise an influence for righteousness far beyond anything in the past, but it lacks the spirit and diverts its energies more in the direction of keeping the organization alive than in proclaiming the free spirit of Jesus. We must never forget that always there are any number of people who have not bowed the knee to Baal but who are anxiously searching for a God who will banish a million wrongs from the earth and give peace to a bewildered and befuddled world.

Sometimes the cry is *undefined* and *inarticulate*. "One crieth unto me out of Seir!" That cry represents the multitude which no man can number who cannot understand the church, who cannot connect what they believe in with Christianity. Donald Hankey sat in the trenches during the first war and wrote about "The

Religion of the Inarticulate." And that is what I am thinking about as I try to describe this cry. We have forgotten it, but it goes up just the same and we ought to hear it. The man who utters it thinks that Christianity consists in believing the Bible from cover to cover and setting oneself up to be better than others. By believing the Bible he means believing that Jonah was swallowed by the whale. By setting up to be better than one's neighbors he means not drinking, not swearing and not smoking, being close-fisted with his money, avoiding the companionship of doubtful characters and refusing to acknowledge that such have any claim upon him. And the reason why he thinks this is what is meant by Christianity is because Christian people have left that impression by their mode of conduct and by their narrow, smug, self-righteous attitudes toward the world. Why can we not see that the virtues of unselfishness, generosity, love and humility are just as Christian when they are found outside the church as they are when they are found inside, and that a deep-seated goodness is far more acceptable than a formal performance of Christianity carried out in correct forms of worship in a church?

Well, these are the cries we hear. "Watchman, what of the night?" When will the morning light of the faith of Jesus dawn upon our darkness? When will the flood-lights of the simplicity of Jesus break upon our world? When will the cross be set up in the midst of society?

Here is Edom crying to Judah. Here, out of a world

of darkness, comes a cry to the children of light. What kind of an answer can we give? Do we have an answer?

The first thing that may be said about it is that if men are looking for a religion that will relieve them of the perplexities and difficulties of life, whether intellectual or moral, they are going to be woefully disappointed. "Morning cometh, also the night." There has never been a time when there has not been both morning and night. There is a rhythm everywhere here on earth. Things vary and alternate. There are day and night; summer and winter; fruitful and barren years; health and sickness; we sleep and we wake; age follows youth; we live and die; tides ebb and flow; moons wax and wane; flowers bloom and wither and die before the autumn frost.

Perhaps you are saying, "That is fatalism. If that's the way things are made, the only thing we can do is to accept the inevitable and let it go at that. What's the use of struggling and striving, and being good, and loving one's neighbor? Why work to change the social order or to bring about a finer adjustment of our industrial system? Why worry about war? If it is decreed that I should lose my job, that my children must go without food and clothing, that I must wander aimlessly about seeking work and finding none—what's the use? Let God take care of things in his own good time." No, that is not true. I am only saying what is true in nature, and what is true in human experience, and what is true in my experience and in the experi-

ence of every family. You have always got to reckon with nature and with human nature.

But I will tell you what answer religion can make. It can bring your perplexities to a focus. It can show you in one great sweep the height and depth, the length and breadth of the mystery that confronts you in life. And in doing that, it can raise your own nature to the high level of meeting it by the release of the faith that is in you, by the qualities of courage and love with which you were born. It can arouse in you an heroic spirit which will enable you to live under any condition in life. It can give you enough power to stand whatever strain is put upon your life. Pain and suffering may not cease, cross-currents and life's dark shadows will not flee away, but some divine substance within you will come to the surface and enable you to be more than conqueror over those things. Religion has never conformed to our notion of a "good time." It never smooths the path. It never accommodates itself to our weakness; it always meets us on the level of our highest moments. It grants what someone calls *power* rather than satisfaction; courage to face danger rather than safeguards against it; inspiration rather than explanation. The manifestations of God's nature are just as real as anything you have ever handled with your hands or seen with your eyes. The trouble with you is, as George MacDonald said to people in his day, "You are little children sitting on the curbstone hunting in the gutter for things. Behind you is a King's palace, finer than Buckingham. In it your Father sits. But you

won't listen. You won't even turn around to look. You just keep on hunting in the gutter for things, and it doesn't matter whether it's rotten vegetables or pennies or shillings you find there. They can't make you happy without your Father."

The second answer to these cries is that the mystery of life meets you at every step of the way. And I would have you remember that the darkness which settled on Edom was the darkness that settled on Judah. It was the same dark dome of heaven. It was the same starless sky. The gloom of the one casts its gloom on the other. Problems are everywhere. But to abandon belief does not abandon the mystery of life. What a fine thing it would be if we could just do away with the storm of life every time we stick our heads in the sand! If that were the case I would be hunting a nice sandy spot myself any number of times, or maybe a pool of water. A man might even go out and get drunk. Anything, just so the trouble would pass. But lo and behold, after you have resorted to all these expedients, the trouble is still there. You still have the problem of human sin, human inequality, life's failures, moral delinquency, and a hundred and one things which beat about you and buffet you on every hand. Do you get rid of them? You have the answer. No, the only thing you can do by abandoning belief is to cut yourself off from that one source of light that can direct your feet.

Now the final answer to this question is that Jesus is the solution of our problems. There is no other answer

today except the answer that the watchman gives—"Would you know more, come back again!" But the trouble is we do not come back. We leave Jesus aside. Hear what He said: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." We thought we could. Men thought they could run their business on a low principle of ethics and hold on to their religion at the same time. Women thought they could go the pace in social circles with now and then a friendly nod at religion, and get by. You thought you could be respectably religious and at the same time put your trust in things. Well, it could not be done, and about the only way to have you find out all that folly is to allow you to run amuck.

Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesses," but you thought it did. You sacrifice the time you ought to give to your children to a vain show. You pitied the other woman whose only claim to happiness was a profound trust in the truth of things. You thought you were superior because of what you possessed. But it was not so. You waxed fat and kicked, but when you called for help in the deep silences of life, you had no place to go.

Jesus said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life." But you have been living as though Jesus had in mind a picnic journey. It is high time for people to know that being good sometimes means that when they meet dark things in their pathway, they must go through them, not around them. Easy enough to be good while the road runs by the shining shores of the Lake of Galilee, but not so easy when it turns into

the Garden of Gethsemane and becomes the Via Dolorosa.

Somehow a man must work himself through to some sort of a position where he can see clearly and where he comes upon the thing that will produce tranquillity.

If you think that, because we are living in a changing world, man's deepest needs have changed, you are mistaken. If you think that, because you have more things than had your fathers, you can get what you want by the same demanding of it, you had better change your thinking. The only way for a person to get a final answer is by the process of a wrestle with the angel of God like Jacob of old. The difference in you is the difference that is found on one side of the brook Jabbok and that found on the other. And the difference is brought about by one's willingness or unwillingness to cry, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me."

V

THE CROSS AND OUR NEEDS

Is it not strange that preachers are always under the necessity of speaking and standing up for those principles which seem to be diametrically opposed to contemporaneous philosophy? We dip back into an ancient literature and find sayings such as these: "The meek shall inherit the earth," and "A little child shall lead them." Yet such sayings have been the burden of preaching, for these many centuries. We have been declaring on no less authority than that which comes out of the moral order of the universe that the dominating power in the world is found in the individual who is the simplest and the most unsophisticated; in the man who is not artificial but intrinsically human, whose inner principles and impulses belong to his humanity. We have been saying that a man with the openness of a little child shall be the harmonizer of the world.

Clearer than ever today we see these principles flaunted and laughed at. Adolf Hitler has virtually said, "Give me a superman who makes plans and then invokes a God of war to help him carry them out."

Benito Mussolini says, "I have a friend who shares my views of power and I'll march with him." Hold up the saying of the prophet, "A little child shall lead them" and the saying of Jesus, "The meek shall inherit the earth," before these two men, and they will laugh at them. We are tragically aware of what can happen to a world when a diabolical philosophy grips the minds of nations.

But I hasten to say that by no manner of means can we lay the total blame on these nations. They are but symptoms of an unchristian philosophy which has run rampant in the world. We have said over and over again, "The end justifies the means"; "I will get what I want"; "We will build armies and navies and thus secure the strength of our nation." For three thousand years the prophets and preachers have been declaring other principles; and for that length of time nations and individuals have been ignoring them.

So I want to plead again for a few primary and simple emotions, which, if acted upon, will lead to the highest religious life. First of all, a plea for confidence, a cordial and generous trust in men as men. One of the wrongs in our society, especially in urban life, is that we do not know the people next door to us, and moreover we do not trust them. And we do not trust them *because* we do not know them. I was talking about this to a little company of people. When the speech was finished one man said: "I was reared in the country. There we could trust people. We knew them and liked them. But here in the city it is another thing. Most of

the people who live in my apartment I don't want to know, and if I did know them and extended any helpfulness to them, they would take advantage of me." In a simple society he could trust people; in a situation more complex he could not trust them. A virtue works under one set of circumstances and under another it fails. What had happened to that man was that he had been defeated by a big city.

One of two philosophies every man must hold. Either trustworthiness is general and deceit is occasional, or most men are deceitful and trustworthiness is exceptional. If he holds to the first he will believe that the better thing is to be wisely trustful and believe in people. If the second, he takes the general view that everybody is bad and must be watched; and if perchance he does find a good person, he is the exception to the prevalent depravity of the human race.

Who does not know these two attitudes? But where has there been a man who could harmonize conflicts and lead men wisely who did not trust humanity? Jesus had this instinct to a perfect degree. True he excommunicated men. He was not blind to the perfidy of men's minds. He knew their weakness, and he knew what they would eventually do to him. When he denounced the wicked deeds of men he did it because he believed in the honor and integrity of the mass of people. He knew that the chief blame for what the people were whipped into doing lay on the doorstep of men sitting in the seats of the mighty.

We need a bit of this fiery judgment upon the evil

deeds of men. Upon their duplicity, their selfishness, their greediness, their desire for power, their suspicion. If the rank and file of the population bite and snarl at each other, it is not because they have antagonistic feelings; not because they belong to different races and nations; not because they do not have common interests; but because they have been taught distrust by those whose lives are ruled by selfishness, greed, and ambition for a place in the sun.

The second plea which we are making here is for simple morality. It is possible to give a hundred theoretical reasons why the right ought to be done. But you do not do right by arguing about it any more than you believe in God by trying to prove that he exists. You cannot even give a reason always for *doing* right. In fact, doing right often seems silly, while doing evil frequently seems the most logical thing to do. When men lived in a primitive society it was comparatively easy to follow the rules and do right. But society has now become so complex that it is less easy to untangle the right from the wrong. More tragic than that is the difficulty men have in acting righteously once the moral course has been determined. History abundantly proves that whenever a society or an individual loses a moral outlook, weakness sets in.

A letter from a friend said: "What cuts me deepest is that our world is getting to the place where religious values are being thrown to the winds. Fathers and mothers in their homes, people in our churches, have insisted that children be taught to love, not to hate; not

to kill but to conserve life; not to lie and cheat, but to speak the truth; not to destroy but to build; that humanity is above a nation, and God is above humanity. Now look! We drift away from these values which we claim are vital in the character development of children."

Many of us are wondering why we spend time giving right values to children, while older ones find it advantageous to discard them at their convenience.

A little child says, "Honesty is right." Experience says, "Honesty is the best policy," and then tries to cover up its conscience with the robes of selfishness. But suppose, during the past twenty years, there had been a universal adult conscience which said, "This is right, whether it pays or not." It is quite within the realm of possibility that nations today would be pursuing their peaceful ways, and we ourselves would not need to be engaged in a feverish race for large armaments to protect our interests, if such a conscience had existed.

Then there is the matter of simple religion. It is conceivable that a man should make no profession of religion of any sort. He has no hope, no fear, no care, no love. On the other hand it is understandable that a man should have a belief in some unseen power, the kind of religion that makes him walk through life looking up, seeking communion with heaven.

A third kind of religion would be inconceivable were it not for the fact that we see it so often. I mean the man who is religious but hides it from himself; the

man who has a belief in God, and yet never mentions God's name, never refers his life to the God in whose hand he is. This man essentially believes in God, but does not allow God to motivate his actions. He lives and thinks by standards that are other than God's standards. He is willing to acknowledge that religion cultivates beauty, that it is good for society, that it could produce peace if only nations had it. But he himself never lets his life go out to God. It is these unawakened souls who could tip the scales of the world toward righteousness.

There are two moving stories which bring home to us this emphasis on religion. One is found in the career of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen. He once met a shepherd in the Highlands, to whom he put the unlooked-for question, "Do you know the Father?" The shepherd, taken aback, said nothing; but the wonderful tone and personality of the questioner made so deep an impression upon his mind that he could not get past the question put to him, nor dismiss it from his mind; with the remarkable result that, meeting Mr. Erskine many years afterwards, the shepherd recognized him at once, and said, "I know the Father now."

The other is the story of George Borrow who wandered into the fields of Wales and fell into conversation with a group of gypsies. He did not talk to them of religion, yet all unknowingly the virtue of religion went out of him; so that when he was about to go, they besought him, saying: "Oh, it was kind of you to come that you might bring us God." He made it clear that he

was neither priest nor minister, but they entreated him the more, "Oh, sir, do give us God."

That is the cry of the world: "Oh, sir, do give us God." It will be a great day when such a simple religion is established in the hearts of people that their lives will be motivated by it, and the world will see its sincerity, and its workableness, to the extent that it will say, "I see the Father now," and "Oh, sir, do give us God."

VI

THE URGENT BUSINESS OF HEARING

Now and then one comes across a word in the Bible which is meant to startle the hearer and make him prick up his ears and listen. Such a word is "Ho!" "Ho, every one that thirsteth!" Another is "Run!" "Run ye through the streets of the city!" Another is "Behold!" "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." And here as you thumb the New Testament you come across the word "Hearken!" "Hearken! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Here is the key-note to one of the finest lessons in the Bible. It is called by some "The Parable of the Sower." It is more truly called "The Parable of the Soils." It is a bit of autobiography, a sort of transcript of the experience of Jesus. It is said of Jesus that no one needed to tell him anything, he himself knew "what was in human nature." He had been around long enough to know the kind of people who were listening to him. He knew that any number of people on any given occasion would be entranced with what he had to say, but would go away like the man

who looked in the mirror and straightway forgot what manner of man he was.

The thing Jesus was thinking about in this parable was the soil of human understanding and response. "There were gathered unto him a great multitude." That was the soil. Some came out of curiosity. Some were revolutionary. Some were shallow. But some came with longing, with hunger, with desire. They could not explain it. But that is always the case with the deepest emotions and longings of the human soul.

To all these various types Jesus would speak a parable about themselves. He would tell them just what chance his words had with them.

"Some seed," he said, "fell by the wayside." We know the impossibility of raising grain on a hard-baked surface. Alongside the fields, his listeners knew so well, there was somewhere to be found that kind of soil, packed down by the constant tramping of the feet of pedestrians. At one time the path—just after the farmer had plowed the field—was as good as the rest of the field, but it had been walked on too often and the seed lay where it fell or was picked up by the birds, just as the pigeons at St. Paul's in London pick up the seed that is dropped by passers-by. The ground was closed.

There are minds, said Jesus, just like that. They are closed. The old church which stands in the Middle Temple Court in London dates back to the days of the crusaders in the twelfth century. On a brass plate in the floor, above the grave of a valiant spirit, there

appear these words: "He died the only kind of death it is worth to die—a death for God, for the Right, for Liberty. Such a death is immortality." It did not say he died for the church, or for his country, or flag. His was a bigger outlook. For when a man *dies* for God, for Truth, for Liberty, he has given basic, undefinable values concrete expression. To him they were not abstractions, divorced from human conduct. Unlike the crusader's, the closed mind and heart see no relation between religion and personal actions and conversations in the world of men.

It is comparatively easy for a habit and routine of life to destroy the freshness of truth. The habitual way is the easy way; it is also the uninteresting way. You will never know the joy of living until you are willing to open a book and say to it, "What have you got to teach me by way of opening up new avenues of truth to me?" Or until you can stand before some preacher or teacher, and say to him, "What new light can you throw on life's pathway that will enable me to walk with firmer tread and help me to mount up with wings as eagles until I can stand in the very presence of God himself, stripped of all prejudice, pride, and self-conceit, and welcome only the truth of things as they are?"

We need also to put our new-found emotions into practice. William James used to say, "Never suffer yourself to have an emotion without expressing it afterward in some active way." Many people have too much intake and not enough outlet. If some thrill of

goodness or truth lights up your mind and warms your heart, go straightway and let it out among the haunts of men where it can be picked up and borne along through the stream of humanity. Do men get into degradation through a process of reasoning? No man ever got himself into difficulty in that manner. He was swept into hell through a powerful emotion. And if that is the way he got into it, he can get out of it only in the same manner.

Then, too, Jesus indicated another kind of soil, another kind of person. This man had an open mind for everything, but he was shallow. There was no depth. When I was a boy I sometimes went with my father on his rounds among his patients. He was a country doctor. He knew the soil. And occasionally he would say to me, "Now look at that ground. No wonder that farmer's corn is spindly and yellow. The soil is no good. It is too thin." The corn never had a chance to take proper root. It would shoot up suddenly in the spring, but when the hot summer came, it dried and withered and shriveled up.

"Straightway, they receive the word with joy, but . . ." If it were not for that word "but," a lot of us could get along quite well. We are glad that the old feudal days are gone, but every age leaves something behind it which it is worthwhile for the coming generations to ponder over and think about. And feudalism had its glory in this respect: when a serf decided to remain with his lord he stood before him and uttered these words solemnly and earnestly: "Dear, my lord, I

am liege man of thine for life and limb and earthly reward, and I will keep faith and loyalty to thee for life and death, so help me God."

Honoré Willsie Morrow in her book, *The Splendor of God*, told the story of the great Adoniram Judson. What took that militant soul into persecutions and dangers of all sorts was that he stood and beheld in awe and wonder the splendor and the magnificence of God. If the shallow soul who says, "I will die for thee," would stand and gaze with unrestrained wonder at the sheer glory of the cross, it would do one of two things to him: it would either make him slink away ashamed or he would bind that cross to him as a chaplet of grace and never again whimper or complain about the hardships of the righteous life. For the greatest persecution of today is not physical. The persecution we must endure today is a prevalent cynicism which says that Christian idealism is a momentary phosphorescence, a daydream, or at best an impossible counsel to perfection. This is another way of saying that our roots have no depth.

The third kind of hearer was the man with the pre-occupied mind. He said, "Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked it." The thorns were not there when the seed was sown. At least they were not visible. But the ground was befouled with them. They were underneath the soil ready to spring up at the right time.

Here is the real tragedy of the parable. You can do little with the closed mind, and you have little confi-

dence in the open mind and the shallow heart, but seed sown among thorns—ground that gives every appearance of being good ground, ground that is possessed with marvelous possibilities!

Do you see that ground, whole acres of it? That crowd of college students with four years of learning blown over their heads. They with their talents, their opportunities, their new-born knowledge. They before whom have stood leaders of thought in many avenues. That crowd of folk inside the church and out of it who are not bad, who have high imagination, genuine passion. But they are not whole-hearted. They are torn between two irreconcilable loyalties—a desire to serve God, and the pull of Mammon. One thing is sure, you can never reconcile the philosophy of Caiaphas, or Pontius Pilate, or Annas, or Herod, with the philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth.

You do not need to have hold of a Canada thistle in order to have a thorn in your hand. A stalk of corn in a wheatfield has no business to be there. A raspberry bush is all right in a raspberry patch, but a raspberry bush in a flower garden is a thorn. Mammon is all right in its small place. It takes a certain amount of money to live in a world like ours. Power is potentially good and power need not be despised. But when these get in between a man and his God they make a jungle out of a rose garden and chaos comes back again.

I can see Jesus smile when he comes to the last part of the parable. Here he is dealing with the positive portion of his lesson—the fruitful life. It may be hard

to find it, but it exists. He knew it was there. And those who find it are described in Luke's account in three little phrases which glow like torches.

First, "an honest and good heart." That does not mean faultless or flawless. It means direction. Have you ever seen the points of a compass quiver and quiver and finally come to rest where they should? That is what an honest and good heart will do. It always turns to the highest and best. It may wander, and the blasts of temptation may cause it to tremble and shake, but always it turns toward its home—the home of God's peace and righteousness.

Again, the fruitful life is meditative and steady—"having heard the word, keep it." If ever some great truth grips the human heart, the good and honest heart will cherish it. Sometimes popular opinion will make a man wonder if it is worth while to hold a great truth and steer his course by it. But surely human history is crammed with evidence that popular opinion is the low-water mark among human standards. What greater honor for any man at the end of his life than to be able to say with Paul: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith!"

Then, too, Jesus says the good are the patient. "Bring forth fruit with patience." The farmer looks down the long furrow with patience. He plows his field today, and by and by comes out of his house and sees the blade; after that, just before the frost, the full corn in the ear. It takes a long time and much patience for a man to grow a character. But God never becomes

weary so long as he knows that through many winds of adversity the good man will be victorious and triumphant in the world.

It is told of the Roman Emperor Julian, who was surnamed the Apostate, that on the road to the East he stopped for a month in Antioch, the city of his youth, to rest and re-equip his legions before their arduous campaign into Persia. Donning the cloak of a philosopher one day, the Emperor strolled into the city to mingle with the crowds, to listen to the gossip in the taverns and to hear the comment of the public orators in the forum. On the way, it is said, he observed with extreme satisfaction that his decrees against the new religion of Galilee had been strictly enforced and that the cult of Mithra had everywhere been restored to honor. Dirt and refuse lay heaped against the walls of the Christian chapels and their doors and windows had been boarded up.

Continuing his stroll, the Emperor walked into one of the populous quarters, where he espied a certain merchant by the name of Agathon, whom he had known in his youth.

Now, Agathon was one of the few in Antioch who had remained Christian.

Julian engaged the merchant in conversation and, as they stood talking together, they saw the festive crowds streaming by to the marble temple of Mithra; for it was the god's anniversary, and Julian had ordered a sumptuous celebration. From afar the two men could see the white clouds of incense that rose from the

altars, and to their ears came the sound of priestly music and the voices of the faithful singing hymns in praise of the sun-god.

Agathon had grown silent, but Julian suddenly laughed and asked the pensive merchant, in a bantering tone:

"Tell me, Agathon, what has become of the Carpenter of Nazareth? Is he still around?" And, pointing to the temple and the joyous multitudes, the Emperor added: "Has he any work at all these days, your Carpenter? Are there still some little jobs coming his way at least?"

For a moment Agathon was still. Then, looking the Emperor in the face, he said: "Yes, Julian, the Carpenter of Nazareth is very busy these days. . . . He is nailing together a coffin for your Empire."

Six months later Julian was no more. The Galilean had conquered.

VII

THINKING GOOD THOUGHTS IN AN EVIL WORLD

A PROMINENT newspaper columnist recently declared that "It is difficult to get people to do good deeds in the midst of a naughty world." One can go further than that and say that it is difficult to get people to *think good thoughts* in the midst of an evil world. If only we did not need to mention war! The horror of modern warfare is such that even the people who believe that it is the only method whereby issues can be solved, especially when these issues seem to have been drawn by Germany's leaders, are reluctant to portray war in beautiful colors. In the last war we spoke of its glory, put a halo of sanctity about it, and made men see the figure of Jesus walking on the battlefields and giving war his blessing. Today, we say that though war may be necessary it is nevertheless a grim and bloody business. The people who believe in war's necessity acknowledge that it is evil, but a lesser evil which can be used to drive out a greater evil. That is strange reasoning, especially in the light of the fact that Jesus was charged with going about in the garments of

Satan for the purpose of driving out Satan. He resented the charge and said, "How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a Kingdom be divided against itself, that Kingdom cannot stand." Yes, though men reason *for* a thing when war is imminent which they would repudiate in peace times, they nevertheless recognize the evil tidings which war brings.

So while we say we wish we did not need to mention war, we are caught in it, the air is filled with it, and we cannot escape its influence. It is equally obvious that it is impossible to change people's sympathies. During the past twenty years many books were written, many speeches made, many suggestions and plans offered, with the hope that a condition would be brought about whereby nations could come to some mutual understanding which would keep them at peace with each other. Many people visualized all of the horror we see today. We could go on and recount a score of reasons as to why this war came about. But to spend time discussing the reasons for the war when the fat is in the fire, when we are faced with the stark realism of war, would be foolish. War is here, and one cannot keep people from expressing their sympathy. We well know where that sympathy is directed in this conflict.

But when we have said that, there still remains a Christian compulsion which we cannot get rid of, namely that of thinking good thoughts of peace in the midst of the evils of war. I do not pretend to be saying anything new when I ask you to obey this compulsion.

There never was a time when evil was absent from our world, and there never was a time when any other attitude than that of goodness was enjoined upon people in the midst of wickedness.

One goes back to the days of Jeremiah and thinks again of what he laid upon the hearts of his countrymen when they were living as captives in Babylon. Those people were by no means contented with their lot. And there were false prophets who were constantly advising them wrongly. But Jeremiah, who never lost his faith amidst the worst possible circumstances, wrote a letter to these captives and told them to build houses and plant gardens, and raise children, and above all to seek the peace of the city where they were held captive. He told them to hold the thought of peace, to keep their minds on the distant future when they should return again to their native land where they would dwell in quietness and peace beneath their own vine and under their own fig tree. And not only that, but he urged upon them that God was a God whose thoughts toward them were thoughts of peace and not of evil.

One cannot read very far in the life of Jesus without discovering that he thought good thoughts in the midst of evil, that he told his disciples to do likewise and to keep their hearts set upon the day when a new Kingdom would arise, a Kingdom where love of God and love of one's neighbor should be the universal practice.

Coming a bit closer home, it has been one of the profound principles of successful living, that we should

endure hardship in the world, be peaceful where others are warlike, love where we are hated, do good when evil has been done to us and keep our heads when other people are losing theirs. So I have a right, even in the midst of war, to ask people to keep thoughts of peace in their minds, and to hope and pray that speedily nations will see the folly of war—that it is wicked as hell and hurtful not alone to the bodies of men, that it not only destroys cities, but that it destroys the minds and souls of men. “Fear him,” said Jesus, “which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Now as we look about us to discover what is the particular evil in the world today, and the spirit out of which it is born, we can say that no greater evil than war has ever been visited upon the earth. If there have been greater evils, the chances are that there is no one living today who has seen them. If that seems an overstatement, we can at least say that no greater evil was ever brought home to the minds of so many people nor has evil ever been on a wider scale. Just when it began to be born, at what precise hour it took its rise, will probably never be discovered. But somewhere along the line there grew up a wicked spirit in the world which has produced war.

It is a spirit, first of all, which is irrational. Now a man who really thinks will consider to what ends his acts lead. But a spirit of irrationality acts and then later builds up a kind of thinking which will support his deeds and justify them. Japan, for instance, bombs China and then says that it is not only for the purpose

of expansion but that it is for the best interests of China that she should be subdued. Russia goes into Finland and then justifies the act on the ground that Finland was about to attack Russia. Italy declares war on Ethiopia and justifies herself on the ground that Ethiopia needs Italian civilization. Germany lets loose her bombs on little countries and then says it was necessary in order to keep the German citizens from mistreatment in those countries. This same irrationality is spreading to our country, and glorifies power as expressed in the greatest army and navy in the world, as though the strength of a nation depended upon these. We used to say that "Righteousness exalteth a nation," but now that idea has become outmoded. We have changed the old adage, "Look before you leap," to "Leap and then justify your folly."

Then, too, the spirit of violence is abroad in the world. Jesus said that "the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." He meant the man who storms heaven's gate and who sets his heart and mind in the direction of wresting the secrets from God for his own soul's sake. But the violence we see today is not the violence of the man who sets out on a good enterprise. It is the violence of men who hate. Hate for something which grew in the heart has set men to building bombers and warships which spit the fires of hate upon helpless women and children. One does not read very far in *Mein Kampf* before discovering that Adolf Hitler hated something. He did not start out by hating other nations so much,

but by hating people in his fatherland. Then hate grew. Other people began hating him. Hate became a vicious circle, until now a great many people who are otherwise kindly disposed, and our own nation that normally has always had a friendly spirit, begin to hate. Whoever has been responsible for the start of this hateful spirit, we know it is here. It is a sad commentary on our civilization when one must admit that hatred has taken possession of the lives of individuals and of nations.

Then again, there is a Christless spirit that is abroad. That does not mean that we have come to the place where we are willing to throw the Bible away. More Bibles are being sold today than ever. It does not mean that men regard Jesus as a myth, nor that he did not say some fine things, nor that he did not do good deeds, nor that people say he is not the hope of the world. The devil believes what we believe—and trembles. But it *does* mean that the spirit of Jesus has been thrown away, that we are not yet ready for the spirit of Jesus, that in some distant future we may accept his teachings, but not now. The teachings of Jesus are all right, but just now the business at hand is war. And when the war is over we will come back and pick up our Christianity. You see, Christianity interferes too much with man-made plans. You can never fight a war on the basis of the Christian ethic. The first thing necessary to fight a war is to clear the decks of Christian principles.

You do not persecute a myth. You always persecute

a reality. And because Christianity is a reality which stands against the powers of darkness, it is persecuted. Paul was right when he said, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Well, this is the world in which we live—a world of irrationality, of violent hate, and of Christlessness. If it were not all that, our supreme attention would not be directed toward war. It is not a very bright picture. You will not wonder that I said I wished we did not need to mention war. The newspaper columnist was right when he said, "It is difficult to get people to do good deeds in the midst of a naughty world."

But it was never easy. We have always been called upon to do good deeds and think good thoughts in the midst of evil. Thus when Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon and told them to seek the peace of the wicked city, he gave us a lesson for our day. And in the one word he used—"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of *peace*, and not of evil," he gives a method whereby we can think good thoughts in an evil world.

First of all, we must begin with a right idea of the attitude of God toward us. Whatever evil is in the world, and because of it whatever evil the peoples of the world must endure, we must realize that God does not desire it.

To be sure, it is not easy for us to believe this. The question that men have always asked is, "Is the uni-

verse friendly?" A man asked that question as he stood on the sands of Egypt and saw the great Sphinx looking down on him. "Is the universe friendly?" It is difficult for us to believe in a friendly God for several reasons. First, the world is so large. God is so great. Any being that could make a universe, would hardly concern himself about one little man or woman. But if we are going to think good thoughts, we have got to believe that "not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's will," and that the little daisy which we crush under our feet took as much thought as did the highest mountain. It is difficult too, because we are not sure that God has any plans for us. Here is a youth just ready to start out in life. Then a war arises and says, "You are not your own. Come along, you may live, but the chances are you'll be killed." Here's a man who says, "The road ought to be smooth, but it is terribly rough. I do the best I can, but see how I've been victimized." Yes, it is hard to believe that God's thoughts toward him are thoughts of peace, not of evil. Then again, we are not sure that God does not change his plans. A colored man in the midst of the earthquake in Charleston said, "Good Lord, come and help us; oh, come now, and come yo'self, Lord; 'taint no times for boys." Yes, it would appear that God leaves his plans in others' hands. Perhaps the world was made by God, and I was made by God, but by a God who died. His intentions were excellent, but he passed on before his work was finished, and so has left everything as confused as we see it.

Well, remember you have got to believe that God does not change his mind and that he has not gone away and left the steering gear in others' hands. God still thinks peace toward us, and not evil.

If we can once get our minds fixed on this focal point of God's goodness toward us, then the second thing must follow; we must think well of others. It is no easier to think well of others than it is to think well of God. When God said to those captives in Babylon, "The thoughts, that I think toward you, are thoughts of peace, and not of evil," he was not expressing mere good intentions. It was a creative goodwill, something that would make *them* peaceable. And when we are asked to think thoughts of peace, not of evil, it means that somehow the peace which is in us shall catch fire in the souls of others. Perhaps we have forgotten that Jesus said evil consists not only in an outward act but also in an inner condition. One can sin by thinking murder as well as by committing it. I heard a preacher say that if any one of the dictators would stand before him he would shoot him. To such an extent can our ill-will go. I read a story of how a young man went to his minister with a look of horror in his eyes. He told him how he had been expecting to inherit a sum of money on the death of a relative. Of late he had gotten into many difficulties and, in his need, he caught himself wishing his relative were dead. "It has just come home to me," he said, "that but for the restraints of society I would have killed him."

You see to what evil lengths our evil thoughts can

lead us. Ah, yes, for our own sake there is need to guard our thought-life, and have it burned clean of evil and filled with the spirit of peace. Ask yourself if, in the midst of war, you are not in danger of killing off the peaceful spirit which is of the essence of Christianity.

Then, last of all, we can begin to disarm our minds now in regard to other nations. How often we hear these days that when the war is over we will make a just peace. God grant that it will be so! But we cannot wait till the war is over to begin thinking. Our thoughts must be thoughts of peace, not of evil. This again is not easy of accomplishment. When fearsome things are happening, we fill our hearts with fear. When hostile forces are arrayed against us, we become hostile.

I can hear someone say, "How Utopian! Things don't happen that way in a world such as this." But what else is there to say? We shall never have peace on any basis except on the basis of a life lived in Jesus where "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

If I have one desire it is that above the evil of the world we may see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. There is a story told of Leonardo da Vinci that when he was painting his great picture, "The Last Supper," he had an unfortunate quarrel with a certain contemporary and thought of a terrible revenge. He decided that when he painted Judas he would paint an unmistakable likeness of his enemy for the face of

Judas. So among the earliest paintings of Judas he gave him the face of his enemy. But when he came to paint the face of Jesus he could not get it right. Time and again he tried, but it would not come right, and he knew the reason. He painted out the face of Judas, sought out his rival, became reconciled to him, and then painted the face of Jesus in a way which has put all the world in Da Vinci's debt. You cannot paint the face of Jesus for a world of evil, either actually or in a poetic sense, unless you have his spirit. The unveiling of the face of Jesus comes from a church and its people, a nation and its people, who in their thoughts and lives, partake of the nature of Jesus, whose thoughts are thoughts of peace toward all the world, and not of evil.

VIII

THE UNKNOWN TOMORROW

THE familiar lines in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* sound quite modern:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time:
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.

It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

It is so easy to fall into the mood of *Macbeth*, especially in a day when the world is so completely upset and when our minds are horrified by the lunacy of war. We hear people say, "There is no security"; "This is the end of civilization"; "One can't make any plans for tomorrow." When someone reminds them that there never has been a time when we could be

absolutely certain of the future, they fall back on the statement that things were never as they are today.

It might be well to take a look at the New Testament writers. They lived in another day and, because of their many trials, had developed a rugged faith. They had much to do and too much to think about to take a sentimental view of life. They did not shut their eyes to the future. They looked ahead, and told the world to look ahead, but not to look along the low level of the earth and its changes. They clearly indicated that to keep your eyes glued to the earth, listening to all the raucous cries around you, would not give you a perspective. You can make guesses about what is going to happen, but they are only guesses; you cannot reach anything that approaches certainty. For, said one writer, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

One cannot help but wish that people, especially people who have no hesitancy about believing in religion, would take their eyes away from the newspaper headlines for a while, shut their ears to commentators, and remember the fallibility of the human mind and the place that God occupies in the affairs of this world. I do not mean by that that we should shut our eyes to facts, nor that we should manifest an unconcern about events happening around us which will undoubtedly affect the lives of all of us. Since we must live in this world it becomes of immediate concern to us how the future is to be shaped. But I say that I wish we could evaluate the place that God occupies, because of

the cheer and encouragement we need, because of the stimulus it would give to our duty, and because of the calm it would produce in our hearts as we face an unknown tomorrow.

"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath in his own power." That means, in the first place, that there are narrow limits to our knowledge. We know a few things about the future, but only a very few. We know that we shall have some joy and some sorrow in life. There are people who do not like to face the fact of sorrow, but deep in their hearts they know that some sorrow is bound to come. We know that most people who are alive today will be alive tomorrow. This is true even in cities where bombs are dropping by the hundreds every minute, and in a nation such as ours where four hundred people meet death because of drunkenness in a single holiday.

We know that most people will go on doing tomorrow substantially what they are doing today. For a few people tomorrow will hold some great change which will darken or brighten life. For most people tomorrow will find them doing what they are doing today and being the same kind of people.

This is a great day in which to live. That does not mean that it is a great day because there is a war nor because so many people are suffering. But for the person who wishes to contribute something, who feels that perhaps some little spot can be influenced for good, who believes that he can be a light in the midst of a good deal of darkness, no better day can be

imagined. And it is good that we do not know more about the future than we do know, for the present must have a reality all its own and must not be too greatly colored by what is to come.

And since we cannot know too much about the future, either of the world or of ourselves, what is the wise course of conduct? Well, I should say there are three courses we can pursue. First, let us not imagine that tomorrow must be as today. Perhaps the reason for our pessimism is that we are afraid of the changes in the *status quo*. Change for change's sake only is liable to bring us to a day of despair. An ancient writer said, "Abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good." There are some permanent goods in the world, and not for anything do we want them changed. But to think that things must go on tomorrow as they do today means only that men are fooled into a dream of permanence which has no basis.

Again, do not anticipate evil. We spoil our days all because we keep our eyes glued on the possible evils of tomorrow. Evils there doubtless will be, but why allow them to shut out the good? It is a great deal better to anticipate joy than sorrow, health than illness, peace than war. The thoughts of one's mind and the desires of one's heart may become the reality of the world.

Again, fit yourself for the duties of tomorrow. I do not know what your duties will be, nor do I know what mine will be. But whatever they may be, rest assured that without a wise foresight against that day when duties may become hard, we will never perform

our duties. Jesus gave us a little lesson in this when he told the Parable of the Virgins. Five took no oil in their vessels with their lamps, and when they found their lights had gone out at the call of the bridegroom, they could not go in to the wedding. Nor could they buy at that late hour, nor borrow from the others who had no more than they needed. The time of emergency is no time to equip oneself with the necessary faith and courage to meet it.

Yes, our limited knowledge reminds us that we do not know much about times or seasons.

In the second place, we may well believe that the future is in safe hands when it is in God's hands. "Times or seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." I read newspaper and magazine articles more today than ever before. And I am sure that anyone who listens may detect one note. "If the Allies win this war such and such things will happen," say these writers, and "If the Germans win so and so will happen." I would not be misunderstood as saying that events do not color history. They do. But the implication behind these utterances is that nations hold the destiny of the world in their grasp. Imagine what that means! Nations, it says, can hold the world in their clenched fists and, with a twist to the right or the left, can determine how the world shall think and act. We are told that even Christian civilization is dependent upon the result of this conflict.

You search in vain to hear one such note in any of the doings or writings of the New Testament saints.

In the darkest hour of Jesus' life one hears him uttering a note of joy: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And even in the midst of their sufferings the early Christians never said that the destiny of the world was in the hands of Caesar.

I have a few old books in my library written by Alexander MacLaren during the days he was thundering away in his pulpit in Manchester, England. That was back in the last century. Many times I have been almost persuaded to take these books off my shelves to make room for more modern books. But I have discovered that on the few occasions when I take one of these books from its place, I find a truth that jars me to my heels. Thus it was when I asked this old author what he thought about this idea which I am discussing with you. And right there on one of the pages I found his answer. "We do not depend," he says, "on an impersonal fate, not upon a world of chance, nor on tendencies, nor on the spirit of the age. The world is still in the power of God." That is the voice of a man who had his faith grounded in an eternal Goodwill, and I have been thinking that if he could arise from his grave today and stand amid the ruins of Manchester, his voice would ring out with the same depth of conviction.

What I am trying to say to you in a rather blundering manner is that we must never imagine for a single moment that, appearances to the contrary, God has taken his hand off the steering gear of this old universe and capitulated to the mind of petty man. To be sure

the future is disciplinary in its nature but through it all God is wise and tender, and no condition can happen in the world without God being in the midst of it and acting as the interpreter of its meaning for us. We do not know the times or the seasons, but we can know that they are safe because they are in the Father's hands.

Then in the third place, these New Testament writers tell us that there are certain practical duties which belong to us in view of tomorrow. I have been as much perplexed as anyone can be with the turn of events in the world. I go just so far in my thinking—and beyond that I cannot go. The way is not clear and indeed on many occasions I am even disposed not to think at all but to allow myself to be ruled entirely by the propaganda which flares out at us on every side. But to live by that is not becoming to anyone who has the remotest idea as to the claims of Christianity upon him. Thus in the light of the Gospel I have worked out a bit of philosophy for my own guidance in the future. Maybe it will be of some help to you.

First of all, I shall just go on *doing*. It is not a question of what I shall enjoy or what I shall endure. It is a question of just going on working. If I could shape this sorry scheme of things to my own desire, I would probably do it. But if I could, what a sorry mess it would turn out to be. I would want the world shaped thus, and you would want it shaped thus, and a third person would shape it quite differently, and soon we would be at each other's throats in a death struggle to

have our own way. No, I will go on working, doing what comes to my hand to do, and being perfectly content with the manner in which God is shaping the world.

Then too, I will regard each day as an opportunity for service, and let the future take care of itself. It clears away the cobwebs from our brains. When I was a young lad I recall how sometimes I heard the sweep of the farmer's scythe. He was clearing out weeds, or getting a corner of his grain field ready for the reaper. Sometimes I heard across the field the cry of the farmer to his horses. I listened also to the click of the blacksmith's hammer upon his anvil and heard the lowing of the cattle in the meadow. These are the real things of life. What we are going through now is a miserable nightmare from which we shall one day awake only to be greeted once more with these simple things upon which we shall always depend. Walter Rauschenbusch prayed a great prayer in which he implored God to "Grant us a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and to save our minds from being steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing whenever the thornbush is aflame with the glory of God."

A third bit of philosophy tells me to be a witness to the things of the spirit. Last winter I had the privilege of meeting and talking a little while to Muriel Lester. Among other things she said, one remark stands out clearly: "Surely God has something which He would like to break through to the world. We must be the

transmitters." Was ever a truer word spoken? Somehow we must be sensitive enough to know what God is trying to say. We must be the witnesses. If we are not careful we will be witnessing to everything else except God.

Just how you are going to get through the future without going mad, and doing and saying things which are contrary to the whole Christian ethic, without God, I do not know. That little saying of Louise Haskins, given over the radio by King George VI, ought to do it for all of us in any day: "I said to a man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way.'"

IX

FACING THE CROSS

READ your morning newspaper and note the evil in the world! We have wasted time trying to trace its origin and in doing so have succeeded only in coming out at the same end we went in. But the fact that we cannot be sure of its origin, does not lessen the terrific impact which evil makes upon our souls. Jesus recognized its presence long before it hung him on the Cross. When he took his disciples aside and taught them to pray, he said, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When he prayed for them he implored God not to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

People who live in a Pollyanna world insist that there is no such thing as evil. On the other hand, it is quite easy to become pessimistic about it and to assume that we are caught in a net from which it is impossible to extricate ourselves. To take either of these positions leaves the matter just where it was and in the end the purpose of life is defeated.

Anyone who looks about him becomes aware of the

presence of three kinds of evil. First of all, there are the evils that attack the body. Sickness comes. Troubles arise which produce fear, causing nervous disorders, destroying poise, making the temper short, and in general causing the depletion of one's physical powers. Jesus saw people who were caught in the grip of these evils. They were beseeching him to help them. There were some imaginary ills—and there are some today. But an imaginary ill can be as dangerous as a real ill. In fact, a doctor would much prefer to deal with a real ill whose causes are discernible than with one that finds its seat in a mental or spiritual condition.

Then there are evils that visit the land through fire, flood, and earthquake. Anyone who has experienced any one of these knows that some disaster has happened that cannot be laughed off. When flood drowns your friends and the members of your family, or when fire destroys homes and you find the charred bodies of little children in the ashes, something terrible has happened. When earthquakes rock the land and bring houses tumbling down, opening great fissures in the earth which devour human beings, you cannot go around with a smile upon your face as though nothing had happened. Long ago the Psalmist wrote about the "pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday." He knew the sorrowful calamities that were visited upon people. Yes, there are evils that come by reason of these natural disasters.

Then there are social evils. Who can say that war

has not taken its toll in dead bodies, in crippled lives, in sorrowful parents, in devastated countries, in hatred, in revenge, in murder, and in warped minds and souls? Look also at the political intrigues, the arrogant nationalisms, the heartless economic systems that have brought injustice and wrong to countless numbers of people. These conditions are nothing new. They were all present in the days of Jesus, and he knew they had much to do in blighting the souls of men and ruining the religious life. He saw the imperialism of Rome in its heyday, he saw a ruined temple, not being used as a house of prayer, but transformed by men sitting in Moses' seat who did not have the spirit of Moses. He watched men bind grievous burdens on the backs of other men and saw them bring their gifts to the altar with unclean hands. The men of his day talked much about religion and performed punctiliously the letter of the law, but forgot the weightier matters—justice, mercy and truth.

He did not close his mind to these evils nor try to make himself believe that they did not exist. They were very real evils, and sooner or later he knew they would break upon his head and confront every advance of the Christian enterprise in the future. They made their stand against him when he rode into the city of Jerusalem during the last week of his life. He saw the gathering clouds and it became necessary to take some attitude toward them. Three ways were open to him and three ways are open to us.

First of all, there was the way of retreat. He could

go back. Into the city there had come a delegation of Greeks from the outside world. From afar they had heard of him, and they came with the eager request upon their lips, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Why not go to them? Why not leave the nation of his birth to wallow in the mire while he sought more friendly associations?

Is that not a man's first impulse when he faces a difficult situation in life? Does he not feel that the best thing to do would be to flee? If we could "grasp this sorry scheme of things entire and mould it nearer the heart's desire," then there might be some meaning to our going forward. But since the world is too much for our weakness why not leave it to its fate? Who are "these that have turned the world upside down?" asked the first century world when the disciples carried the good news into the heart of paganism. But somehow the tables were turned as the centuries rolled by until now the church seems dangerously near being upset by the world. Christianity so frequently takes on the color of the world, compromising whenever it seems expedient to do so, retreating instead of advancing!

But the natural outcome of that position is that the same old troubles remain. If retreating were the solution of the problem, we might say, "Let us run as fast as we can and let the world get itself out of the mess."

Jesus faced another possible line of retreat. When the evils arose he was tempted to make his belief and confidence in God an escape mechanism. He wanted

to fall back on the bosom of his Father and remain there. Listen to his prayer: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" We forget that Jesus had human impulses, and that for a moment, at least, his soul could shiver like the needle of a compass. But scarcely were the words out of his mouth before he said, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." It was not his business to find refuge in a God whom he thought could shield him from danger. He was not facing a pleasant prospect. He was facing cruel hearts and hands that were already stained with the blood of innocent victims.

In face of any ugly experience the instinct of the human heart is to turn and say, "Father, save me from this hour." It is the cry that has gone up from many a heart and I would not give much for a man's religion or his bravery if he did not tremble when some calamity loomed in the path. The coward is not the man who is afraid, but the man who allows his fear to keep him from performing his sacred duty.

An appeal to God may be only a form of cowardice. It is not unusual to find people who regard God merely as a power house in time of trouble. When they have health and money and are surrounded with all the good things in life, God does not figure in their lives. But the moment trouble looms they imagine that they have a right to expect that God will deliver them. It is strange how God is expected, in some magic fashion, to deliver people from the pit which they have dug for themselves.

There is an old saying which runs, "You can't have your cake and eat it too." And there is a no less understandable and inexorable saying of Jesus: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall find it." You cannot save yourself and at the same time march forward bravely. You cannot dodge all the responsibilities of life, and then lay claim to God's comfort and God's protection in the face of difficulty and evil. To ask for the privilege of escaping all the pain of the world is cowardly; to ask God to keep your soul *in* danger is the mark of a man or woman, who, while still afraid, nevertheless, will not go around evil but through it.

There was one other way open to Jesus, and that was the inward retreat. He had to make up his mind. We sometimes imagine that the greatest agony Jesus endured was either during the time he stood before his accusers or when he was hanging on the cross. But not so. The greatest agony was during the time he was making up his mind whether he ought to flee or go through with it. It is the making up of a man's mind which causes him distress because of the wavering between two courses. But when once his mind is made up, peace comes, trouble vanishes like mist before the sun, the soul is calm, and the destined course grows clear.

So Jesus would go on even though he knew it meant crucifixion. What, for ages, have we been teaching our youth? Has it not been that honor is to be prized

far above the rewards of lying and cheating, that virtue is its own reward, regardless of the consequences? Why have we made these demands upon youth, and then as the young grow older excused their adult deflections on the ground that it is human to err and divine to forgive?

Jesus believed also that evil had in it the germ of its own destruction. He said, "They be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." There were times when he felt that the thing to do was to make goodness triumph by force. But he also knew that two wrongs never make a right; and force is a wrong. With love as the norm of his living and teaching, the only thing he could possibly do was to stand and watch men and nations defeat themselves by their own evils. "If thou hadst known the things that belong to thy peace," he said, "but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, and shall slay thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Yes, he knew what the nation was headed for, and all he could do was to stand and watch it fall. I would be the last person to say that there is nothing good people can do to preserve the world from destruction. They can do everything, for it is through people that God expects to save the world. But they cannot

do it by force. We go out to make the world safe for democracy, or safe for Christian civilization—fine slogans, implemented by force. The ultimate outcome is more hate and revenge, more suspicion, and bigger and better guns. It takes patience to wait and to use your heart and head while most other people and nations are losing theirs. When force is rampant, the only thing to do is to wait until men and nations get so bad that they come to the end of their tether and cry out: "To whom shall we go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life."

Jesus believed, too, that the thing to do was to put a *good* in the place of every evil. The one bright spot in Jerusalem two thousand years ago was the cross that held on it the man Jesus. If you want to see it in its fullest significance you have got to see it against the background of evil. One supreme good act can put to flight a hundred forces of evil. A life to be good must be good for something, and if evil is to be conquered it is only when the light shines brilliantly in the darkness, and when others see the good works of righteous men.

X

WHAT THE CROSS DOES

Not many people knew the significance of a weary man carrying his cross up a hill to a lonely spot outside the city of Jerusalem two thousand years ago. To the people who lived along the route to Calvary the sight of victims being marched along that road was familiar. In the morning hours the unfortunate wretches were led out, and toward evening the soldiers marched back to their barracks without them. "Poor soul," the people who came out of their houses must have said as they watched Jesus pass, and shuddered a bit, and probably wept over it, till the procession was out of sight. Then they went back to their household duties, got their children ready for school, and by and by the man of the house came home from work, hungry and tired. The day's routine surged back again and the episode of a sorrowful man with a look of sadness and surprise upon his face, was blotted out. Perhaps down in the city little groups were gathered, and some said, "We thought at first he might be the Mes-

siah, but the scribes said he was a fool and a mad man. He had some followers, but they've all deserted him, and it is a good thing we didn't grow too much excited about him. Anyhow, this is the end and we may as well forget him."

And yet, grizzly, sordid, and ephemeral as it seemed in its outward circumstances, that wayside cross has been found to be the most momentous happening in human history. To the conventional eye Jesus went down to defeat on Calvary, and the honors went to Caiaphas and Pilate. Even for the friends of Jesus it was the end of all their hopes, the going-out of the light of life. But now, more than ever, when things grow dark, and men's minds are puzzled and confused with the wicked ways of the world, people cluster about the cross, and stand and look. And as they look, their hearts are lightened and their faces are not ashamed. Light breaks through the darkness, and where once there was no meaning, Jesus in his death becomes the epitome of the world.

Erskine of Linlathen used to express his wonder at what he called "the dumbness of God." God would not speak. He knocked, but the heavens were brass. When he prayed God never came back with an audible answer. Was there ever a man of us who did not have a similar experience? We hoped, and dreamed, and wondered about God. We asked whether he cared; whether he was a God of mercy; or whether he was an ogre sitting on his throne delighting in his children's misery. But somehow at the cross God's

silence is broken. He speaks. He lets us see through the darkness. The veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom, and we see behind the scenes. For once we see what God is like; for once we hear his rich, heart-breaking voice cutting through the silence like the sweep of a sword-blade. And when he speaks, he tells us what was happening there at Calvary.

First of all, he tells us that he is revealing God's love. One of the most difficult things for a human being to do is to find out what God is like and what he means for human life. Plato said, "The Father and maker of this whole is hard to find." Phillips Brooks confessed to a sense of strangeness and foreignness which lies like a fog across the entrance to the divine country, a certain wonder whether a mere man has any business there. Yes, God is so manifold that it is hard to be sure that one has the whole of him. And philosophy has not brought us too much surety about God. Philosophy tells us that there is a great something beyond, the soul of the world perhaps, or something further away still. But philosophy is too round-about. It takes little account of man's cravings and needs, and how desperately anxious he is about having them satisfied. But the cross goes straight to the mark and tells men that God is near, that he knows and can be known, and that what he means for them is love.

For a long, long time we have heard of God's austerity. He brought the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt, relieved them from the stinging whips of their oppressors, brought them through the perils

of the Red Sea marshes and across the burning sands of the desert. All this left the bones of the patriarchs along the way, but God was with them, guiding them by day and night with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. Austerity still seems to be the dominant note in the religion of many people. They think of God as hard, unbending, imposing severe discipline upon them.

Nor do men easily forget God's justice. Over and over again the cry of justice leaps at us out of the writings of the prophets. One would hardly have expected the prophets to write otherwise. Their people, ground under tyranny, needed champions of the rights of men. What man of us today does not cry out in anguish of soul for justice to "roll down as rivers and righteousness as a mighty stream?" But justice is not enough. It can lead to a grim Shylock attitude, crying for one's pound of flesh. We do not like injustice, but it is possible in our wrath to allow ourselves to progress no farther than to spew out "threats with a vengeful rod." Men must long for something more than justice.

Men, too, have long thought upon God's majesty. They think of him as high and lifted up, whose train fills the temple. I walked one day toward evening with my little grandson. He looked up in the sky and exclaimed, "The moon, the moon!" If he could have spoken in the language of the prophets, he might have said, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." Watching the

constellations rise and pass in stately procession out of sight, beholding the rhythmic sequence of the seasons, we become conscious of the majesty of God. But majesty cannot satisfy the upturned faces and hearts of a confused and beaten human family.

It remains for the cross to reveal the outreaching *love* of God. The most arresting and fascinating characteristic of Jesus was his portrayal of the divine compassion. What teacher ever gave God so thorough and so puissant a personality? God loves and enjoys the world he has made, down to the last sparrow in the nest. He is the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost sheep, finds it and puts it on his shoulders with joy. He rejoices over one sinner that repents. Other teachers half hinted at the failure in God, his world was a mistake and the larger part of men fit only for the flames of hell. Not so Jesus. He saw better and read the triumph of God; the leaven leavens the meal; the seed brings forth a hundredfold; the lost is found; the son comes home, drawn by the Father's invincible and irresistible love. He breaks down obstacles between men and himself, and when they become angry with him or suspicious of him, he reconciles them to himself. Jesus "passed by the great classical speech of religion, which was fast becoming a dead language to the living world . . . and took up the father and mother tongue, the dialect of the human heart, and at his summons and by the transfiguring power of his personality, the name of Father became pure and great enough to describe the inmost nature of the Eternal

One." All this compassion reached its highest point on the cross in his cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Again, the cross brings the assurance of forgiveness. Recent world events have lifted us out of our shallow thinking about sin and the need of its forgiveness. Some four hundred years after Job put into the mouth of Jehovah the beauteous words, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy," another poet "saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away . . . and he that sat upon the throne said, Behold! I make all things new." Nothing but a new creation would serve. The contrast between these two views of the world sums up a great deal of human experience. With all its charm and wonder, there is something wrong with the world and with ourselves; and the deepest and tenderest natures have felt it most. Men have been driven in spite of themselves to wrestle with the problem of evil.

But we have got to be clear about what we mean by sin and forgiveness. And the best way to be clear about sin is not after the manner of theologians who make it an intellectual problem, but after the manner of Jesus who turns his gaze upon men and women and sees in them the type of sin from which they need redemption.

He put his finger on the spot
And said, Thou ailest here and here.

Thus Jesus issued his warning against four kinds of sinners. First of all were the people who were hard. The old Litany of the church sends up the cry, "From hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and authority, good Lord deliver us." And that hardhearted people are in danger of severe judgment was indicated when Jesus told with what surprise people began to realize where they stood. On the right hand of the Judge stood those who ministered to the hungry and to the thirsty, to the stranger and the prisoner, to the naked and the sick. It was the habit of their lives to be kind, and yet they were unconscious of having done a good thing. Wordsworth stood above Tintern Abbey and spoke of the people who do "little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love," which are "the best portion of a good man's life." The acts of kindness were forgotten just because they were instinctive, but decisive. They came out of the heart and revealed goodness.

With the people on the left hand it was the other way. They missed the point of living. They were instinctively hard. They had little concern for their fellows. It is from this hardness that the cross can deliver men. If a man's spirit has about it a wall of hardness it were well for him to sing Charles Wesley's great hymn, looking at the cross:

He heals the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free.

The second kind of sinner which Jesus meant was the man with the unclean thought. Not the man only who does the foul deed, but who would like to do the mean thing if the circumstances were just right. Paul said there were people whose minds were stained and darkened and invalidated for the discharge of their proper functions. It were better, said Jesus, that a man's body be mutilated than that his mind be perverted. Hermann Rauschning in a magazine article, *What This War Is Really About*,¹ tells what can happen to the characters of men when the mind swings away from love of the humanities to the cruder patterns of life: "Nothing shocked me more profoundly than the visible change in acquaintances and friends whom I thought I knew, when they came under the spell of the National Socialist system. Good people as far as human beings are ever good, seemed subject to new appetites. My fellow-farmers, honest and upright, pious, God-fearing, if one may call it that, who could never have brought themselves to do a dishonest act—all at once you find them unscrupulous, dishonorable, taking advantage of the weak. They acquire new habits, take mistresses, grow domineering. They gamble, live beyond their means, sink from level to level, and finally become vile scoundrels who think nothing of tormenting, robbing and murdering those weaker than themselves."

¹ Reprinted in *Redbook*, April, 1941, from the book, *The Redemption of Democracy*, published by Alliance Book Corporation.

When once we see to what low depths our minds can lead us, it is time that we look at the cross and say, "Give me the mind that is in Christ Jesus."

A third type of sinner Jesus said, was the man who played at religion. The Pharisee's world was a world where tithing anise and mint and cummin were important, and where justice, mercy, and faith, were forgotten. He got the big things of life where the little things belonged, and the little things where the big things belonged. After all, we do live in a real world, a world where love operates, and where truth is to be sought after and appreciated, not toyed with. The Pharisee believed in God, but he was a God of his own creation. He was a dummy God, a God who could be humbugged, who was the figment of his own mind; not a God with whom he could have union, and who made him say, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" If a man looks at the cross, and sees that it was the doing of the will of God which nailed Jesus there, he will go away with a deep sense of his own need of a God of reality.

A fourth group of sinners which Jesus discovered were the ones who never could make up their minds. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking backward, is fit for the Kingdom of God." Not the downright bad man. Indeed, he may be highly respectable. But the man who is not positively good. The Kingdom was won for Jesus at great sacrifice, and we may be sure that the doors to that Kingdom will never swing open to the man who cannot be relied

on, who cannot make up his mind to plow or not to plow. A man cannot stand long before the cross without either being made to hate it, or taking it up and following on to the end.

The final thing that the cross does, is the renewal of life. Rogue Herries in Hugh Walpole's story, was a man born with a dream. All his life he sought what he believed he could find—a perfect love. He was a man of great, turbulent passions. At seventy, his life in retrospect seemed to have been a meaningless anarchy, a bitter waste. And then a great and shining moment arrived. The dream came true. All the hates and lusts, the evil and the pain, the guilt of life fell away from him, and he stood cleansed and fulfilled in his brief paradise. His final judgment was this: "Life has a meaning at last," he said, "life has a meaning. One fine hour is enough."

"One fine hour is enough." We all know how a dozen dismal days can be forgotten when we have one day of glorious sunshine. Or perhaps we have discovered how years of disappointment and unrewarded toil can be transfigured by one day of glorious achievement. One fine experience can make the desert blossom as the rose. I remember how on one gloomy Sunday morning, after weeks of discouragement had laid my spirits low, a stranger came to my study after the morning church worship. He told me how he had listened to me over the radio, and how he wanted to come to my church. He had travelled a hundred miles just to see and hear. And then, as he was about to de-

part, he picked a little bundle off the floor, all neatly wrapped and tied. "Here," he said, "are some things from my farm. I thought you might enjoy them." At home, I opened the package, and found it contained two bunches of celery, two dozen fresh eggs, a ring of country sausage, and two pounds of Pennsylvania scrapple. I recall, as though it were yesterday, how all the discouragement fled away, and how my spirit was cleansed of disappointment in that moment of sheer kindness to me. "One fine hour is enough" to blot out not hours only, but years of frustration, of sorrow and of tears.

One more thing, standing in a world of storm and stress, of disquiet and difficulty, when the world seems bankrupt of wisdom, it is well to stand close to the Cross of Calvary, our one strong hope, the strength of today, and the hope for tomorrow. We shall look in vain to see man crowned with glory and honor, as the Psalmist hoped, but we see Jesus, the crucified. One hour before that cross is enough to save us from cynicism, from fear, from despair.

Recall those lines of Joyce Kilmer, written out of the blood and welter of the last war, and how in the contemplation of the cross his own life and strength were renewed:

My shoulders ache beneath my pack
(Lie easier, cross, upon His back).

I march with feet that burn and smart
(Tread, holy feet, upon my heart.)

Men shout at me who may not speak
(They scourged thy back and smote thy cheek.)

I may not lift a hand to clear
My eyes of salty drops that sear.

(When shall my fickle soul forget
Thy agony of bloody sweat?)

My rifle hand is still and numb
(From thy pierced palm red rivers come).

Lord, thou didst suffer more for me
Than all the hosts of land and sea.

So let me render back again
This millionth of thy gift.²

² From "Prayer of a Soldier in France." From *Poems, Essays and Letters*, by Joyce Kilmer, copyright 1914, 1917, 1918, by Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

XI

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

A YOUNG man, barely thirty, took up a lonely vigil in a dark wilderness and made this firm resolve: I will not cater to the physical appetites of men; I will not do spectacular things to win a hearing; and I will not use Satan's standards in order to build my kingdom.

If any man ever started out with boundless enthusiasm and high hopes, that man was Jesus. A story is told of how one day, in his carpenter shop, he rose and stretched his aching muscles. And when his mother saw his outstretched arms silhouetted against the wall in the shape of a cross, she became alarmed. It was a token of what would happen to her eldest son.

That is only a story which may or may not be true. The probability is that it is legendary. All we know about Mary indicates that she thought his passion was leading him to fanaticism and weakness and the kind thing to do was to get him back home. Whether or not she saw a cross in the carpenter shop, the fact remains that he had not gone far in his work before it

was evident that the tensions which were being created would lead him to swift death on a lonely cross outside a city wall. His end was foreseeable from the beginning.

And why? Why did they crucify him? One would suppose that such a transparent soul would be allowed to live and bless the world. How *could* they put him to death? Paul, looking at it from a distance, could come to no other conclusion than that Jesus had been "a stumblingstone and a rock of offence." Pure spirits have always been called offenders. They get in the way of false philosophies, low ethics, mean practices, and blind prejudices. Strangely enough, a bad world will always lay the charge of evil at a good man's door.

And so it was with Jesus. He offended them at the point of their patriotism. Patriotism can be a noble and disinterested love of country. And where would the fires of patriotism burn more brightly in the soul of a lad and a young man than in Nazareth where the synagogue spelled out God's care for Israel, and where Jesus heard the ringing phrases of prophets and psalmists on love for their country? They all took up the cry, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth."

Yes, Jesus was a patriot. But his patriotism was not the patriotism of his contemporaries. Theirs was born of contempt of others, of resentment, of pride, of prejudice. His was born of love for his neighbor, and his neighbor was both friend and enemy. If we can

think of a Jew in that day using the idiom of our day, we can imagine many people going about saying, "This Jesus is a pro-Roman." All this was said about the Christ to whom we pay tribute in our churches in gold crosses and stained-glass windows. And our patriotism grows still more contemptuous when we back it up with religious sanctions. Neither our patriotism nor religion is the same as that of Jesus. He would have turned the minds of the people away from disputings over material sovereignty and recalled them to the privilege of spiritual leadership of mankind. We need only go back less than twenty-five years and remember that some of the ablest patriots pointed out the fallacy of the slogans, "Make the world safe for democracy," and "A war to end war," and how fierce was the resentment against these offenders. And today, if we wish to know what kind of tolerance an unpopular idea of patriotism may expect, we need not go back to the days of Jesus. Many pulpits, and radio commentators, and newspaper editorials, will be sufficient.

The second count in the indictment against Jesus was more serious. He would not conform to their religious practices. It may be that we get a distorted view as to the whole of religion in that day by reading the account in the Gospels. Perhaps the writers give us the worst side of it. Not all Pharisees were bad. Nicodemus searched out Jesus there in the midnight on the slopes of Olivet, and asked the question, "How can a man be born again?" Doubtless there were other

Pharisees with the open and questioning mind of Nicodemus. One cannot judge a whole system by its outstanding exponents. But the prevailing religion was traditional. One wonders how this could be so. Their prophets had stood on high places. They had sensed the mind of Jehovah. They had conceived of religion as doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God. But prophecy had long since been silenced. The soul of religion had died and all that was left was ritual. Truth, honesty, reasonableness, and faith, had faded away. Arbitrary rules and practices were on the throne.

Jesus, with his free spirit, could have nothing to do with this pitiful thing which bound the souls of men and made them slaves to dead formalism. He had steeped himself in the language, the thought, the spirit, of an Amos, a Hosea, a Micah. He was caught up in their atmosphere, and he longed once again to restore prophecy to its rightful place. He would tear the veil of ritual from the face of his heavenly Father and call upon the ends of the earth to look upon him and to be saved. Religion such as Jesus announced would either persuade or provoke. And one may be sure that while a man can come to the conclusion that his own religion is inadequate, it is equally true that when a man such as Jesus looks a Pharisee in the eye and says, "Your religion is as filthy rags," he will either yield or take up arms. The Pharisee preferred to take up arms against Jesus.

The third place at which Jesus offered offence was

at the point where he refused to fight his battle and win his cause after the manner prescribed by the people. It is said that "The common people heard him gladly," and that "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." It must have been so. But somehow it came about that their idea of where their blessedness could be found was not the same as his idea. And then there came a time when the crowds faded out, and he himself sought quiet places. And one day he said to the disciples, "Will you also go away?" He knew that enthusiasm could come with the day and pass with the night. And when he began to probe a little deeper into their secular world, when he uncovered their meanness, and showed them how pitiful and insecure were the foundations upon which they were building a religious and national life, they turned away and went back again to their old ways.

The reason Jesus has persisted in our history is because he is too big to be ignored completely. The world sets up defences against him. It takes the religion of Jesus which is pure and undefiled, and perverts it, waters it down, and makes it the bondservant of patriotism. It defends its own prestige against any such thing as the doctrine of love. It does not like its inertia disturbed into action. It dislikes to have its insincerity exposed. All this supplies the motives for a new crucifixion of Jesus.

It would not have been a difficult matter for Jesus to have escaped all this opposition. His own brethren

and his own mother saw the storm coming, as did many of his friends. Friends and neighbors can be a man's worst foes. That is, the worst foes to the integrity of his own soul. There is nothing that can push a person on and on in the face of constant defeat except the impulses of his own soul and the belief that what he is doing will ultimately justify itself. A man does not go on just for the fun of going on. If there is no goal, no hope of accomplishment, why go on? Sensitive spirits are not particularly happy under ill-treatment. They do not enjoy being misunderstood. Running into the outstretched arms of a cross is not a pleasant experience. For a man to keep on moving out into the jaws of death, there must be belief in the certain efficacy of that procedure. For most of us, it is difficult to understand the lengths to which a man will go for something he loves. We have little difficulty understanding hate, or fear, or passion, or caution, in the face of life's exactions. When we see love in its sacrifice, it astonishes us. When we see a man like Albert Schweitzer giving up a lucrative income to go down and live with the blacks in Africa, we wonder why. We have difficulty in understanding a love that suffereth long and is kind, that is not puffed up, that does not behave itself unseemly, and especially does not seek its own and thinks no evil.

I know a little frail woman who fell in love with a drunkard. When she knew he was half intoxicated in the village saloon, she sought him out, took him home, and sobered him up. One cold winter night she found

him in a drunken stupor lying in an alley-way. With the help of a friend she dragged him out, put him to bed, and waited until his stupefied senses were aroused again. After these drunken debauches she never said a word, never chided him. By and by the habit of drinking was broken, and they were married. When I saw him he was sitting clothed and in his right mind. He said, "That was twenty-eight years ago. Had it not been for her love I would have perished that cold night."

When we know of such an experience we wonder at it. And because we cannot understand it, we ask, "Wasn't she taking a tremendous risk?" Yes, and only because love strode on inflexible as the will of God, was the man turned to sobriety. To set out to rescue such a man is a long journey, with never absolute certainty that the thing will be accomplished.

Jesus took the risk when he determined to rescue the world through love. There was at least one man—Judas—in that small circle of disciples, who laughed at Jesus, and who looked upon love as a weakly sentiment. In the face of all the political and economic problems in Israel's life, this was a crazy way to solve them. Only after he planted the kiss of betrayal upon his Lord's cheek, were his eyes opened. Mankind ever blunders on, and only after wars have taken their toll in death and destruction, abject poverty and hate, do men come back to Jesus and acknowledge that it is only love that can tear away the agony of pain.

It is not unusual to hear people ask, "Why talk

about a bloody cross?" In our hymnology we have sought to eliminate all reference to "his blood availed for me," and "precious blood, precious blood." Even our most saintly souls in the church wince at too much "blood." And justly so. One suspects that the theologian, in his attempts to weave some strange mystery about the cross, has been responsible for this blood-curdling hymnology. I do not pretend to be able to understand all that is involved in the cross. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." But I would like to shout to every church member in every church, to every seeking soul: "Write taboo after every theological expression such as 'Propitiation,' 'He paid it all,' and 'A ransom to God.'" We will rid the world of bloody wars only when we stop theorizing about the cross and begin recognizing it as the point where the boundless love of God impinges upon men's hate. Paul has a very discriminating sentence which we might well adopt, looking at the cross: "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

He went to the cross too, because he had in mind the establishment of a Kingdom. It is of little value to belabor the point as to what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God. Is it a Kingdom presided over by a transcendental God, or is it God immanent in the heart? Or both? Jesus himself never fully explained or analyzed it. What he does say is that if a man follows him, watches and waits and dares for the Kingdom with the same abandonment as himself, he will come upon a

level from which he can look upon the face of God and understand him.

If a man is interested in God, he will sell all his other fields and buy the field with the treasure in it. He will sell all his pearls and buy the one pearl of great price. He does not say that this is easy, but he declares that those who venture will come upon a deep enrichment of life. He may never come to the place where he can take in all that the Kingdom means. There is always more beyond. But it is a beginning, an initiation, which leads to what we dimly guess, but do not see. By and by this Kingdom spreads, far beyond the bounds of Jerusalem, until many "shall come from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God." "Where-soever this Gospel shall be preached." "My words shall not pass away." Such a man surveys the whole world and all are included in his plan. There are no bounds to his range. All this came from a Galilean peasant, who, because of the grandeur of his thought was nailed upon a cross.

One cannot go on preaching in a world which apparently has decided that at intervals it must resort to war in order to make the world better, without asking, "Was Jesus deluded?" And further one may well ask, "Am I deluded?" One may go still farther and ask, "If I believe that Jesus saves by the cross of love, where will it lead me?" One may well ask that question. What does it involve? There came a day in the experience of the disciples when they realized that

Jesus would have to die. They were on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus seemed in a hurry and was walking ahead, and they following. "And as they followed they began to be afraid." What would be *their* fate in Jerusalem? There were men in Jerusalem who did not like them any more than they liked Jesus. They were afraid. We can understand their fear.

And we can understand how a man can be afraid today. No man has a right to be anything but afraid who follows Jesus. Where will it lead him? What about his family? What about his career? Nations are afraid of war. For a long time we have been saying that war is worse than hell. But for selfishness and greed, we go in. The war of nerves comes first, and then after a while our Christian ideas take on a sickly color, and we plunge and suffer with abandon. The decision is made. In the end it is a snare and a delusion. One wonders whether the following of the cross does not depend on a similar decision. We compromise, we make bargains with evil, we are not sure that what Jesus dies for will work. We start out right, but when the shadow of the cross falls across our path, we find ways of framing a theology to suit our unregenerated natures. In a world of reality the cross will not work. Love is only for a perfectionist world. It all comes out of fear. We do not know to what foolish ends the cross will lead us. But the world is saved, not by the wisdom of men, but by the foolishness of the Gospel of Love. Whether the world will be saved by the cross depends upon what we decide. It is not "Do

I understand?" but "Do I follow, whether I understand or not?" "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son." If God's love is generated in us we will be glad to choose the cross, and we will not hedge when we are discovered to be "one of them."

XII

BEARING THE CROSS

WHAT a strange fate befell those persons, who, for a few brief moments, came into contact with Jesus Christ! Like ships passing in the night they gleam silvery pure in the moonlight and then are swallowed up again in the darkness.

One would like to know more of the man who was jerked from the crowd that lined the roadway to Calvary and forced to bear the cross under whose weight Jesus had stumbled and fallen. Just for an instant we see him, caught in the radiance of the light, and then he sinks back into the blackness, and we know no more about him.

He was a Cyrenian, maybe born there on the northern coast of Africa, maybe only a resident for purposes of commerce, but most certainly a Jew with the fires of racial devotion burning in his bones. And like every other Jew, however far removed from Jerusalem, he always turned his face toward the Holy City. "My feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testi-

mony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." Whether this was the first time his feet had trod the streets of the city, we do not know. But this once was enough! Where to sleep was a problem. Every dwelling house was filled, and like many another pilgrim he found lodging in one of the outlying villages. Morning after morning during this Passover week he went into the city and every evening he returned to the country.

Knowing not what was to befall him on the morrow, he lay down in peace one night, awoke in calm, and made his way through fields, "gleaming with the scarlet anemones of spring, musical with the bleating of sheep, to the Temple of God." Just as he reached the city gate the procession was coming from Pilate's judgment hall. Pushing in among the spectators, he waited and watched. In a moment a common criminal, as he supposed, staggered and swayed and fell under his cross. Maybe Simon stepped out from the crowd a few paces, drawn by pity, and looked into the face of Jesus. At any rate, he was near, and besides he was a stranger. He would serve the purpose as well as anyone. A soldier's strong hand seized him, the beams of the cross were laid upon his shoulders, and with spear-points urging him on, Simon of Cyrene strode the balance of the way to Calvary with Jesus, bearing the cross.

It is a singular story and full of interest. Singular because an obscure stranger should play such a conspicuous part in the most heroic deed in history and

interesting because this man, going up to the city with joyous heart and shining eyes, should suddenly be thrust into this tragedy. Those who saw him that day may well have said, "What a hapless fate!" The soldiers threw their jests at him and doubtless he pitied himself. What the writer felt who tells us this story we can only conjecture. But at any rate, nothing else that could have happened to him would have compared to the honor unwittingly conferred upon him when the Roman press-gang compelled him to carry the cross.

None of us will ever be able literally to carry the cross of Jesus. That honor belongs to Simon of Cyrene alone. But cross-bearing, even though repugnant to our finer senses, is nevertheless a necessity to enrichment of life. Thus I venture to draw a few simple lessons, not new, but which, in the face of multitudinous interests that thrust themselves in our way, we may easily overlook.

First of all, it recalls the greatness of trifles.

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

We long for the preëminences and the large attainments of life, and when we do not get them we spend our days in envy and bitterness against those who do achieve them. And yet, who can say upon which event, large or small, will depend the formative influences in life? If Simon had started five minutes earlier or later from his village, if he had walked slower or faster, if he had gone into another gate, or if the cen-

turion's eyes had not chanced to alight upon him in the crowd, all his after life would have been different.

So it is always. If you take one turning instead of another, your whole career is colored. If you miss that train, you escape death. "Our lives are like the Cornish rocking stones, pivoted on little points." The most insignificant things have a strange knack of developing unexpected consequences and turning out to be, not trifles at all, but the great and decisive moments of life.

The greater part of any man's life is taken up with trifles. Only now and then does he meet with a big event. And successful living does not so much depend upon what he is compelled to do as upon the thought he brings to it. There was once a woman who made a supper for Jesus; another who poured ointment over his head; a man who gave him a grave; another who brought him a colt upon which to ride, and another who found a room where Jesus could celebrate the Passover with his disciples. Little deeds! But they live in the pages of history and work their way into simple souls who stand and wait before God to whom *great* and *small* are terms that have no meaning.

The Kingdom of God does not come with a shout or with the blaring of trumpets. "It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth is less than all the seeds that be in the earth. But when it is sown it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may come and lodge under it." And

long before Jesus spoke, the psalmist knew what would result from "a handful of corn in the earth, on the top of the mountains." "The fruit thereof" would "shake like Lebanon." The curse or blessing, joy or sorrow, which ultimately comes upon the earth, issues from the minute seeds sown in our daily life. There is no other way of keeping our poise and sanity amidst the many trifles which engage us than by believing in a great overruling Providence which shapes the vicissitudes and mystery of life into a complete whole. It is not the magnitude of the deed that counts, but the motive from which, and the purpose toward which, the deed is done.

Then, too, out of this incident, comes the plainly written lesson that there is blessedness and honor in helping the Christian enterprise. When Jesus left the judgment hall of Pilate he was bearing the cross himself. It was the custom for criminals to bear their own crosses. There is little to be gained by dwelling upon the physical sufferings of Jesus. Read a book such as *Out Of The Night*,—if it does not contain too much propaganda—by Jan Valtin and you will know what beatings and floggings can do to the strongest physical frame over a period of fifteen hours. If you have ever kept a sleepless vigil beside some sick-bed and watched the hours of the long night filled with emotion slowly drift away, you will know what physical exhaustion is. So before the procession had gotten far under way, Jesus fell, and probably part of the way he had to be carried.

But physical exhaustion does not fully explain why he failed to walk under the burden of the cross. Richard Byrd in his sanctuary at the South Pole endured more physical punishment than did Jesus. Jean Valjean suffered more torture in the galleys in twenty-four hours than did Jesus before his persecutors. Nor can you account for his collapse on the basis of a weak will. He had chosen his way and walked it to the end.

Considering the fact that calm heroism and strength drawn from obedience to the Christian ideal have kept many a person from succumbing to physical pain, one is bound to conclude that the collapse of Jesus was due to something which does not lie on the surface. A sea of iniquities had rolled in upon the soul of Jesus. Perhaps he never realized that there was so much wickedness in the world. Here in the city of his fathers all the hatred of a cruel world flooded over the pure and sensitive spirit of Jesus. Sin had blotted God out.

Jesus, stumbling on his Calvary road, represents a spirit that is today struggling to make itself felt in the midst of an evil world. And the honor of giving it impetus falls upon us, and furthermore it is demanded of us if we are his disciples. Wars bring armies to the place where they have their backs against the wall. Even more so, a warring world brings Jesus to the place where *his* back is against the wall. His claims are denied, he is cast down from his throne of love, scoffed at, and crucified. In that day it is not easy to come to his help. One can easily shout "Hosanna!" when

the multitude is shouting it in a day of peace, but when the influential, cultivated opinion of a generation is crying "Crucify!" it is not so easy to stand by. There is one old gospel hymn which we do not sing nowadays, but which comes to me out of the memory of my boyhood days, the refrain of which is:

O Jesus is a rock in a weary land, a weary land,
A shelter in the time of storm.

That refrain still spells out its lesson to our day because it was born out of the figure used by Isaiah: "A man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land." The prophet was thinking of the rock sometimes seen in the desert against which the sands drift, leaving on the leeward side a little oasis. It may not be given to every disciple of Jesus to be a crusader, going out in active combat for Jesus. The church may find it difficult to project its Gospel in an evil world. But what one may reasonably hope for in any day is that a Christ man now will stand against the storm of hysteria and hate. One has a right to expect that the church will stand against the evils that make wars and leave on its leeward side an oasis where the seeds of the Kingdom can blossom and come to fruit when wars are over and gone.

Then again, we may see in this incident of Simon of Cyrene bearing the cross the reward and recompense which come to a man who does his humblest duty.

When Mark set down this story it was at least forty years later. By that time little groups of people had formed themselves into beloved communities. Little boys and little girls at Crucifixion time were now middle-aged men and women. Young fathers were now old men. Probably Mark lived in Rome and wrote his Gospel from that city. Paul was there too. A little Christian church was in Rome. And two sons of Simon—Rufus and Alexander—were members of that church, along with their mother. And when Paul wrote a letter to the Roman church, he spoke of these two men as “elect in the Lord,” and referred to the mother as having been kind to him.

One can imagine this little family group gathering about the fireside of an evening, and the boys saying to their father, “Tell us again of the day you carried the cross up the hill.” And then Simon would tell it, and the boys would go to bed and dream of heroes in the soul. And one day Simon saw the two boys taking the vows of the church upon them and resolving to bear the cross in the midst of a big world hostile to Jesus.

As in Jesus’ day, so in ours, there are various degrees of criminality, from the highest degree of violent malignity down to the lowest point of ignorance. There are also varying degrees of sympathy, from the vague emotions of the crowd that beats its breast, the pity of the daughters of Jerusalem, the kindly-meant help of the soldiers, or the heroic love of women who stand by the cross to the end. But surely the greatest

recompense is reserved for those who go about doing the humblest tasks, honestly and sincerely without any thought of reward. It is the recompense which the heart understands. We may not have our deeds inscribed in any records that men may read. We may, however, give our children and our children's children the consciousness that someone behind them bore the cross. The generations to follow may not point to any one of us and say, "He did this and he did that." A dozen men who broadcast seed upon a prairie cannot say to each other, "I sowed that seed from which this bushel of corn came, and you sowed that from which this bushel came." The field of waving grain came from all the sowers, so "that he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." What gains for God shall come tomorrow, will be the result of the tiny seeds we have sown together.

Once again, it is only by bearing responsibilities which religion imposes upon us that we shall know the results of contact with Jesus. Simon did not know Jesus at first, and one can imagine him lagging a bit behind Jesus. He was humiliated and sulky. And as he walked along he may have edged a little closer and caught a glimpse of the sufferer's face. And by and by he stood and watched until the deed was done. Only then did it dawn upon him who it was he had helped.

It takes a deal of looking at Jesus to know who he is and what he is. One thief could see in him a Saviour. The other looked and cursed. One centurion looked

until he saw the Son of God. The other centurions gambled for his garments. One crowd at the cross mocked and taunted him. The hearts of another crowd were touched with compassion. One can never look at Jesus and remain the same. He will either become a bondservant to Jesus or a child of hell. There is a familiar modern poem which reflects truly the feeling of the compulsion of Christ's command which must mark the church today. The poem is by Elizabeth Cheyney:

Whenever there is silence around me
 By day or by night,
 I am startled by the cry.
 It came from the cross.
 The first time I heard it
 I went out and searched
 And found a Man in the throes of Crucifixion.
 And I said, "I will take you down."
 And I tried to take the nails out of his feet,
 But he said, "Let them be;
 For I cannot be taken down
 Until every man, every woman, every child
 Come together to take me down."
 And I said: "But I cannot bear your cry.
 What can I do?"
 And he said: "Go about the world——
 Tell everyone that you meet
 That there is a Man on the Cross."¹

¹From "A Man on the Cross," in *Master of Men*, edited by Thomas Curtis Clark. Published by Harper and Brothers. Reprinted by permission of Mr. Clark.

XIII

THE CROSS AND A FULL LIFE

ONE can hardly be an observer of the world without noting the various types of human beings that people it. There are people whose joy is found in living a long life without too much concern about living a large and useful life. There are lives fully developed and proportioned and lives that are twisted and warped. There are minds that think in the large and there are minds that fritter themselves away with the petty, the prejudiced and hateful.

We ought to be profoundly thankful to the medical profession for what it has done toward the prevention of diseases which in the past have killed off children and young people, and for its constant effort toward curing diseases once thought to be fatal. But when we have given due acknowledgment, we have by no means exhausted all there is to say about the possibilities of life. The mere fact that our medical scientists have extended our normal expectancy is no argument that long life is in any sense real life. One may live forever and yet not really live at all. One of the most

pathetic sights is idiocy and imbecility in children. However long they may drag out their existence, they will still never live.

So when we speak of life we must measure it in terms of amplitude, not merely of length. Life is what a man experiences in physical, social, and spiritual awareness of his surroundings. The wider his view, the more sympathetic understanding he possesses, the more satisfactory and ample will be his life. If we were asked the question, "Why are we here at all, and what is the object of human striving?" we would have to answer, "In order to live life to the full." That is what Jesus meant when he said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly."

Life, then, must be measured in terms of awareness of one's environment. Our eyes are given us to see the world as it is, our minds to understand it, and our hearts to appreciate it. Right now all we seem to see is a blood-drenched world. God only knows we would indeed be dead if we had no deep feeling about it. But war is not the only thing in the world worthy of human attention, and unless we can somehow lift our spirits above this holocaust, we will never be able to look upon it with spiritual vision. One tremendous realm at least remains fast: nature has not yet capitulated to war. The skies still redden at eventide, birds sing, flowers bloom, the land brings forth its fruits and golden harvests, the ocean still tosses its billowy spray, and tiny streams trickle their way through forest and glen. Lift up your eyes and behold how full

the world is of beauty, majesty, mystery, and God!

Nor is nature all. There is art, music, drama, literature, and science. Down these paths anyone who will can walk to a fuller life. Take them away and see how poor and barren would be our existence. And yet, sad to relate, these marvelous blessings go unnoticed and unused by many.

Furthermore, life is more than awareness of the glories of nature and of our cultural opportunities. In the world there are people—a multitude of personalities which no man can number. People with aspirations, triumphs and tragedies, hopes and fears, purposes and needs. And then back of them, and in them, and through them, stands the ultimate personality—a living God in whom we all live and move and have our being. It is when we realize that "Earth's crammed with heaven, and every common bush is afire with God," that life is lifted far out beyond the horizon of selfish interest.

But the full life does not only depend on the consciousness that we are surrounded with these physical and mental and spiritual stimuli. If we do not make proper adjustments, an integrated response to the sum total, we have not yet found life. One of the most miserable of men we have ever read about was Saul of Tarsus. One day it came home to him that it was hard to "kick against the pricks." And from the moment that he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" he found a new life, a life that was adjusted to his environment.

To make such adjustment is not easy. Everyday problems, indeed some that seem overwhelming, make life extremely perplexing. They seem to be beyond human intelligence and courage. And because they seem to be so, one is tempted to withdraw from the battle, shut oneself in narrow precincts, and live within a shell.

It is not that we are here to accept the *status quo*. Too many people sit down and say, "There is nothing else to do. Here is where I belong, and here I must abide." I can think of a lot of people who instead of accommodating themselves to things as they are, ought to rebel, and make every effort to lift themselves out of their environment. They put a new lustre in the eye, and give wings to the soul, and restore faith in God. Environment problems must be faced and a proper adjustment found if the worth of life is not to be impaired.

Doubtless, too, what many of us need to do in a world that is exceedingly depressing to our spirits, is to think in terms of the need of the world. A great Hindu said, "Why are you so anxious to see God with your eyes closed? See him with your eyes open—in the form of the poor, the starved, the illiterate, the afflicted." "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If it were possible to lift the world of men to a plane of even partial self-forgetfulness, we would find our life and the life of the world.

When we read the history of this war one of the

great epics of courage will undoubtedly deal with the evacuation of the trapped army in Dunkirk. Only those who went through it will know the courage it took. But we can think of an even greater chapter still to be written in the history of mankind. It is the willingness on the part of men everywhere to ease broken hearts, bring courage to the hard-pressed, minister to those who need sympathy, kindness, and love. In short, the willingness to embark upon the adventure of building a broken world upon the foundation of righteousness and goodwill.

Finally, life is found in the development of our potentialities. Unfortunately, none of us will ever be able to fully develop all our inherent capacities. But where is there a person with his nose to the grindstone, doing his daily stint of drudgery, who does not feel down deep inside him the surgings of some nobler and more satisfactory method of life? Life, at its longest, is all too short to realize all the things we would like to do. The tragedy is, however, that we do not live as large lives as we might. We waste our time and talent. We give ourselves to trivial interests when we might dedicate our capabilities to holy causes. Thus we miss the most real adjustment of all, in which talents are caught up into the cosmic purpose. That is the secret of all great personalities. This was the way Jesus found the full meaning of life. Everything he set out to do, every word he spoke, every great purpose he formed, the cross he accepted, were done with the consciousness of the presence of God. Instead of bond-

age his cross brought liberation. Instead of antagonism toward God, it was willing coöperation with God's purpose.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language
and escaped:
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God,
Whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

XIV

HOW GOD PUTS IT TO US

WE ARE approaching a subject which, I suppose comes under the category of a platitude-sin. The dictionary says "platitude" means "flat," "dull," "insipid." In fact most of the things with which a preacher has to deal are platitudinous, a thing, which, in itself, makes a preacher's task difficult. To reanimate a platitude, give it new life, make it effective, one needs something other than one's own mental equipment. One needs divine assistance.

A Scottish layman once set out to tell his young minister what was wrong with his preaching. He did not know exactly how to go about it. So he said, "I'll tell ye in a kind of parable. I remember Tunk Wetherbee's first deer hunt. He followed the deer's tracks all right, but he followed them all day in the wrong direction."

Thus the pursuit in search of the meaning of sin—one can travel in the wrong direction. It is quite possible to think of sin only in terms of drunkenness, murder, theft, and such like. Or, it may be too, that a

great many people do not think of themselves as sinners. But you cannot explain the coming of Jesus into the world without thinking of the sins from which the world needed deliverance.

Sin is not a theory upon which to base religion. It is something which is found in human life. If you do not believe it, look at Europe, and behold the destruction of life and property which sin causes. So, if it were possible to do so, I should like to describe a circle which would take in all of us, and see whether we can find in ourselves any bad things from which we must be delivered. For this is exactly what is charged against us—that we are sinners and need forgiveness. “Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; and though they be red like crimson, yet shall they be as wool.”

First of all, we can say that God desires this world of ours to be honest and friendly. God has been bending his energy in that direction all down through the ages. One hears the plaintive appeal of God for human kindness and brotherhood on every page of the Bible. But strangely enough it has been man himself who has thwarted God in his generous and just purposes. Men come to me with this question on their lips: “Where is God in this war?” Where would you expect him to be? Sitting on some far-off throne viewing the conflict with indifference? Or is he taking sides, inciting men to hate, telling men to kill and wound and destroy, in order that civilization may be saved? No, God is where he has always been, praying in his Geth-

semane and shuddering before the hate and cruelty of men; hanging on his cross weeping over the folly of nations, his garments drenched in the blood and tears of the fathers and mother and children.

There is a little parable nestling within the covers of the New Testament, the lesson of which we have yet to learn. It is the parable of the Talents. The man with the one talent said, "I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo there thou hast that is thine." And the charge made against that man was, that he was a "wicked and slothful servant." Failure to use the talent was an act of selfishness. And the profound lesson from the lips of Jesus is, that there can be no selfishness so private as not to be a matter of public social concern.

Whence come wars? Out of the selfishness and lust of men. Instead of saying, "I'll put my one talent to work, consecrate it to the desire and purpose of a good God for a friendly world," we say, "What I want I take." And saying that in private life, means that in the larger areas where masses of men are concerned, much blood is needlessly spilled and the Kingdom of God languishes.

Brutal deeds that are done in the open shock us. A foul fiend who steals a little child for ransom, we say is worthy only of death. Peaceful nations that are overrun with armies of machines and men, call out our deepest sympathies. We have no patience with barbaric deeds. One would be devoid of feeling if cruelty passed by unnoticed. But there is another form of

brutality which frequently goes unnoticed by us, but not by God. It is a superficially refined cruelty, a cruelty that flourishes in luxury; that is covered up with a certain culture; that thinks only of self, that is outwardly scrupulously clean, but inwardly forgets the weightier matters—doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly before God. It is this sort of selfishness and sin which blocks the way to something that is higher and better. And while we are calling upon God to deliver us from the brutalities of war, we should include a prayer for ourselves, "O God, remove from our spirits those refined cruelties against our fellow man which not only kill the body, but destroy the imperial souls of our brothers."

The second thing that God puts to us is, not only that men need to be delivered from these things that prevent God from bringing about a friendly world, but that something definitely happens to a persistently selfish man. I am pretty much concerned about what will happen to my character tomorrow, and in the next ten years. Are you? I am concerned, as I look at the youth, as to how he will develop upward, in mind and heart, as he grows older. Carlyle was asked in his old age, "Who will be the judge?" "Hell fire will be the judge," said Carlyle. "God Almighty will be the judge now and always." It is of no material difference what connotation you give to the word "hell." But let us not pass by its profound truth. Jesus said to one of his disciples, "Satan has desired to have thee, but I have prayed for you." He feared that some evil would

get that disciple in its grasp and ruin a promising character. He feared, just as we may all fear, that if anyone sets himself against the upward pull of God, something is bound to happen to him. He can lose the power to see things as they are. He misses the high values of life. There was a large class of men in Jesus' day who failed to evaluate Jesus for what he was. They called him mad, a dangerous man and worthy only of death. So they crucified him. They put to death the pioneer of life. As I listen to the talk of men today, I ask myself whether it is possible that people have so resisted the upward pull of God that they cannot see the real values of Jesus and his teachings in such a day as this.

Resisting the upward pull of God brings a man to the place where he fails to see the value of human personality. The cry of Isaiah, the prophet, ran after this fashion: "Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." It all sums up to this: Have respect for human personality. We deplore the lack of that in the totalitarian states. But we cannot lay that sin only upon the shoulders of others. How many of us are guilty of the loss of power to feel a friendly interest in our fellowmen? One noted writer in this country has said, "To me pleasure, and the personal happiness and welfare of mankind are not my profession. I have all I can do to look out for my own happiness and welfare."

That man may be living in a very lonely world, and as age creeps on he may have to say, "I began life like

a dream and am ending it in a grope." An old man came to me one day and said, "I wish you could give me some genuine assurance of immortality." It is the quest of most people as they walk through life—"assurance of immortality." I could not preach if I did not believe in immortality. But you do not reason it out. You either believe it or you do not believe it. But what assurance of immortality is there for a selfish man? Suppose immortality is a state where good souls are engaged in worthy enterprises, working there with God for a friendly world! Where does a selfish man fit into that scheme? Where does a man belong—in that company of heaven-made people—who has gone on in this life living in a little selfish hell of his own? What is the end of such a man? Is it idiocy, insanity, dissolution of personality, relapse into animalism, or must he climb to the place of normality through slow, painful discipline? One sure thing, life, both here and hereafter, is open only to those who heal the broken-hearted, preach deliverance to the captives, recover sight to the blind, set at liberty them that are bruised.

But one more thing. How to be saved from badness of any kind? How does it happen that scarlet sins can be as snow, and crimson deeds as wool? I stood one day in the petrified forest in Arizona and learned that that petrification was in process about one hundred and sixty millions of years. That is a long time and it means just one thing, namely, that this old world of ours was evolved through a long painful process and that God must have destined it to some high enterprise.

God did not intend that this world of ours should be a breeding ground for selfishness. I sat beside a speaker one evening who said, "This old world has always been full of war and selfishness and always will be." If that is so, I wonder what kind of God this is that we are called upon to worship, and why in the name of sense I am wasting my time preaching, and why churches pay preachers salaries and go on giving money for an insane dream. You will never be saved until you believe that a selfish world is opposed to God, and that he made the world where people could live together in peace and tranquillity and where every man would be safe under his own vine and fig tree.

You will be saved too, when you believe that deep in the soul of every person God put a good instinct. The little child looks up and says, "Let me help," and the mother goes down to the gates of death to give birth to her child. It is this good instinct that sends the husband to work for his wife and children, that makes men work and give to relieve human suffering, that cries out in the face of injustice, and that keeps groups working together toward a better and saner society.

You will find your ultimate salvation too, when you act upon the belief that the ideals of Jesus are alive and practicable in a world of chaos; when you see Jesus so devoted to his cause that he was willing to die for it; when you see the necessity of sacrificing to realize the truths which Jesus proclaimed; and when you are willing to commit yourself as strenuously to his cause

as does the friend of totalitarianism commit himself to his pagan cause.

Are you convinced that God is Father and all men are brethren; that the world can be a place where every man will wish for every other man an equal chance at life; and that beyond this life there is a place where men will continue to work for the common good?

God puts no less than these objectives before us. There can be no alternatives, for these are the things that belong to the Kingdom of God, and the things for which Jesus died on the cross.

XV

HOW EASTER LIGHTS UP THE ROAD OF EVERYDAY LIFE

IT WOULD be possible to marshal any number of arguments to substantiate the claim that we continue to live after we die. But when the arguments have all been given, we still have to fall back upon the character of God; for the proof of immortality is grounded in God and is bound up with him. An ancient Hebrew writer said, "He hath set eternity in their heart," and Emerson wrote, "The blazing evidence of immortality is our dissatisfaction with any other conclusion." Doubtless a small minority have no objection to being extinguished after death, but most of us wish for immortality and say with Victor Hugo, "I feel immortality within myself." To the Christian the belief in God leads to the belief in immortality. He assumes immortality and lives on the basis of it.

We might also give any number of reasons why we should believe in the resurrection of Jesus. There are many evidences in support of the fact, and it is true that the writers of the Gospels believed in the resurrection of Jesus. But one can never understand the

resurrection through the intellect. The details are too confusing. All the evidence shows that no one believed a resurrection was going to happen. And when it did happen it was apprehended by simple hearts. Whatever the nature of the resurrection was, it is certain that men came to believe that Jesus could not be forever nailed to a cross. This belief had to make its way in the world and work itself out in the human heart.

So our chief concern on any Easter day is not so much that we should have unmistakable proof of our immortality, or of the resurrection of Jesus, but our question ought to be, what difference does belief in immortality make to us in our everyday life? After all, we are not angels. We are living in a world of tragedy. We are human beings with all the limitations that our humanness implies; we are living in a world where good is, and where evil threatens us on every hand. We could get out of the world by means of suicide. But most of us do not want to do that, we prefer to live. And so long as we prefer to live, we seek a means whereby we can make the human spirit triumph over all the forces set to defeat it. It is not so much a question as to whether we can believe in miraculous events, but rather whether we can believe in a moral miracle which can happen within us to lift us above the exigencies of life and to inspire others with the same belief.

Long ago Job asked the question, "If a man die shall he live again?" And a little later he answered his own question with the words which have sprung from

many lips: "I know that my Redeemer liveth . . . without my flesh shall I see God." You cannot confine Job to the pages of the Bible, nor set him down as merely the leading character in a great drama. You can find Job in any era of the world's history, in hundreds of cities and countrysides. You can find him in the midst of an economic depression and in the war-torn countries of Europe and Asia. You have seen him either in another or in yourself. Here he is: prosperous, not necessarily wealthy, but living in a measure of comfort. He is in the bloom of health. He is a husband who works and who loves his wife. He is the father of children, cares for them, sacrifices for them, provides for their education and sets them an example in religion and ethics. The world is full of Jobs.

This particular Job one might say was above the average in prosperity. How he gained his wealth, whether by dishonest or honest means, does not concern us now. Probably he was no better and no worse than a thousand other Jobs who occupy pews in our churches. One day a servant came running to him and reported that a band of marauders had fallen upon the oxen and asses, taken them away, and killed the other servants. Then another came and reported that all the sheep were burned and all the camels carried away. Then his children were killed in a storm, and to top it off his health failed. Here he was worse off than the day he was born. Job's experience has been duplicated over and over again. We have said you have seen all this happen and maybe it has happened to you.

Now, one of three courses is always open to a man who has met with such ghastly experiences. He can commit suicide. Count Teleki, of Hungary, took that way out. Who are we, standing on the outside, knowing little of his struggles and the hopelessness of it all, to attach any blame to him? Others with fewer troubles have resorted to the same method. And indeed in the eyes of Orientals the deed is a glorious one. Or if one chooses to live on, one can do so in sullenness, discouragement, and with defeat written on his countenance. By and by death will be a welcome release from his physical and mental misery. Or if one chooses to live, one can find a power to overcome these outward circumstances. Job found it in his belief in God and in his certainty that he was indissolubly linked with God in such manner that they could never be completely separated. "I know," he said, "that my Redeemer liveth . . . without my flesh shall I see God." In short, the assumption that there is a God and that nothing could touch the immortal soul, preserved his dignity, and his everyday life became a constant triumph.

Christopher Morley describes his experience along upper Broadway in New York, where the street runs within a few blocks of the eastern shore of the Hudson River. Walking one evening at sunset and watching the sun in its last burst of glory on the New Jersey shore, he says that looking down the narrow canyons of the side streets was like seeing "a great bonfire at the end of every street." It is a great spiritual achieve-

ment if one can see the glory of the sun in the narrow streets of the city of New York! And it would take only a Christopher Morley to describe it in such stately fashion. But it is more than a description. It is a parable—a parable on the effect that faith in immortality has upon the mind and life of one who holds it. One's life may be very ordinary, yea, filled with all the tragedy that Job experienced, yet it is possible to have a faith that lights it up. A bonfire can be lit on the dingiest street of our life.

Consider a few streets on which people live. First of all, is the street called "Danger." That street is well named, for it was never more dangerous than now. People did not know that danger lurked in the sky. Thousands of people are being dragged out from under debris, some dead, some to die later, and some to go on living a life of death by reason of sightless eyes, torn bodies, and shocked nerves. Many of us did not know a short while ago that we were living in dangerous streets in America. Mothers did not dream that war hysteria was going to walk down their street, knock at their doors, and take their boys for military training, teach them how to hate and shoot and stab their fellowmen.

The danger of war is here, but a graver danger confronts us: What is going to be the aftermath? What will be the effect on our democracy? What will be the effect on the morals of the world, the spiritual life of the church, and the peace of the nations?

No one can draw the pattern of things to come. We

wish we could. But more important is, whatever the situation may be, how will we face it? Paul walked along some dangerous streets in his day. He was faced with a multitude of perils, but somehow as he walked into them his soul was lit with a fire: "For our light affliction, which is for a moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen." Paul, believing that he was a creature not only of time, but of eternity, moved on serenely until he came to the day when he could say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me on that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Yes, we need a faith to light up our dangerous streets.

Then too, there is a street called "Occupation." For many people it is a dingy street. I listened to a woman who had been out battling for a good cause on the frontier line of our country. And as she spoke, I found myself asking: How could you endure the work without a light in your soul? There is much humdrum about many an occupation and profession. The work is routine, doing the same things over again, and seeing no progress. The days grow monotonous and the task is thankless. One could arrange the finest social order imaginable, and still there would be people whose drawing of water and hewing of wood would pall upon the soul. Even the best of occupations at times become deadly. A man does the best he can, and still

he is criticized, his motives are impugned and his good offices are spurned. Days come when he feels he must give up. But what holds him and gives him a lift? Only the assurance that he belongs to an order of life which spells fellowship with God, and that honest work has something to do with building an order of human brotherhood. Just as the smallest pebble dropped into the ocean makes ripples that go to the farthest shore, so a man's honest work endures beyond death. There is only one thing that can keep anyone from succumbing in the street called "Occupation," and that is the belief in the timelessness of his labor.

But there is a brighter street, the street called "Human Fellowship." We walk life's road with people—people whom we love, with whom we work, with whom we have social intercourse. There are people, too, who give us encouragement in dark hours, who stand by when the going is hard, who rejoice with us when we rejoice, and weep with us when we weep. There are the loved ones in our own homes, and there are other people whose homes have been to us havens of rest. What are these? Temporary loves and friendships? They are here now, and then they are gone. But are they gone? No. There is something within us that says they abide forever, and as we believe in God and eternal life, we come to the place where we revel in the "Communion of saints." People who do not wilt and wither when these human fellowships are severed are the ones who have within them the glow of immortality.

Yes, the dangerous streets, the streets where we engage in monotonous and humdrum occupations, the streets that are alive with the goodwill of human fellowship, are all lit up when we believe that we move toward a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

But not only does this faith light up our streets, but belief in immortality secures certain values.

First of all, it adds to the reality and importance of the moral effort we make. To be sure, whether there is life after this or not, whether death ends the thieving of the thief and the honesty of the honest man, whether kind women and cruel women both end their lives in nothingness or not, we prefer to live in a world where honesty rather than crookedness prevails, where love rather than cruelty and hate is on the throne. We would rather live in a world of peace than in a world of war. But the kind of people we are takes on greater importance when we believe that, having struggled for a good character and for the most part making a pretty bad mess of it, we have a chance to carry over into another world a modicum of goodness which can be shaped and developed into a character which has about it the likeness of Jesus Christ. We would like to have the opportunity to have purged out of our characters a bit more of the dross under conditions that may be more favorable for doing so than we can ever find here. If character-making has any value at all, it has added significance if we believe that we are trying

under God to create characters that are carried over into an eternal world.

Again, faith in a future life puts a nobler meaning into the best experiences of this life. When Baron Bunson lay dying, he looked up at his wife and said, "In thy face I have seen the eternal." Living together in love and companionship was a rich experience in itself. It would be, even for atheists. But it was a far deeper and richer thing when something that seemed eternal was written on the countenance. What is character? What is a disposition that blesses folk upon whom it smiles? What is nobility of soul which shines into the dark places of other people's lives? What is that thing in the heart called love which drives out hate? What but the revelation of God in a human life?

When John Bunyan described a Christian he spoke of him as a man who put his fingers in his ears and ran on crying, "Life, Life, Eternal Life." And when he was asked, "What are the things you seek, since you leave all the world to find them?" he replied, "I seek an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away: and it is laid up in heaven." Yes, new meaning comes into our best experiences when we believe in the deathless reality of a life in which the face of the Eternal shines.

Then also, when we believe that all men are the children of God with eternity in them, we are moved to respect them and treat them in a manner that fits their worth in the eyes of God. What is a man? Any

man—hod-carrier, carpenter, blacksmith, chauffeur? I have had a belief for a great many years that the reason we have so much labor trouble is because we have never learned the dignity and worth of the human being. And I have had another belief that the settling of labor difficulties would be a comparatively simple matter if once we could get it into our heads that men—laboring men—will cause little trouble if they are granted the privilege of being regarded as men. That sounds naïve, and exactly as though there were no complications and no fault on the part of labor. Let the blame fall where it will. The fact still remains that before peace between labor and capital can come, the strong must bear the burdens of the weak, and those with the power must share it with the powerless.

Man is an immortal soul. He needs saving from his brutishness, and much of the responsibility for saving him rests upon the shoulders of those who by chance or by the power of their own ingenuity sit in high places. A profound belief in the immortality of common men will move all of us to treat them in a manner that befits their worth in the eyes of God.

Finally, faith in immortality brings light into the dark places when loved ones are taken away from us by death. We have all known dark days. One wonders about the dark days which mothers are spending in Europe, days when the news comes back that their boys are lying dead in the sands of the desert, or have found a grave when a torpedo or a bomb hit their ship,

or, have come hurtling through the air from a damaged bomber. Someone in describing a dark day said that it was so dark that "even cats ran into each other." That *would* be a dark day, but no darker than the day when the bright light of the home, a loved one, has been snuffed out. Here in America we are afraid of the dark days ahead. About all we can see just now is darkness.

One might wish that we did not need to talk about dark days. But why slither around them? They come, and when they do come it is a blessed day if the heart glows with the belief that our loved ones are safe forever in God.

Here, then, are the values secured by belief in eternal life; the importance of the moral effort of every man, the value of the best experiences in life, the eternal worth of our fellows, and the light which shines in the dark places of life. Do they mean anything? Does faith in them make a difference to us in our effort at Christian discipleship?

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